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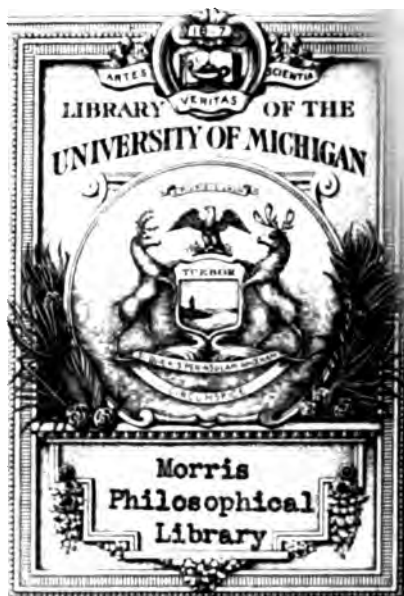
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THE GIFT OF
Mrs. George S. Morris

OF TASTE

ÆSTHETICS.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE

AND OTHER STUDIES IN AESTHETICS.

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THE
DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE

AND OTHER STUDIES IN AESTHETICS.

By W. PROUDFOOT BEGG.

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TO
THE VERY REVEREND PRINCIPAL CAIRD,
AND
PROFESSOR EDWARD CAIRD,
TO WHOM, AS MY FORMER PROFESSORS OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY,
I OWE MUCH OF MY INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM
AND REVERENCE FOR TRUTH,
I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS VOLUME.

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Philosophical Library
of Prof. Geo. S. Morris

PREFACE.

It is nearly twenty years now since I received my first stimulus to Studies in Aesthetics, and it was received from lectures given, and essays prescribed, by Professor Edward Caird, of Glasgow University, in session 1866-67. Early in the session we had as subject of essay, "The Relations of Religion, Art, and Philosophy," and later, in connection with the philosophy of Plato, "The Place of Art in Education." These led me in the following summer to write more carefully, and after a good deal of reading, on *The Power of Art in Education*; and from that time forward the subject of Beauty has been always one of interest to me, and for years one of much thought. The time that has elapsed since my first interest in the subject will explain my references to works of such a miscellaneous character; for, while not always writing on the subject, I have always been taking note of anything that bore on it in the course of my reading.

Among the first works that I read on Beauty were those of Alison and Jeffrey, and of Cousin, and Professor Blackie, and Dr. MacVicar. These gave rise to

the question whether Beauty were merely a thing of association; and I had to settle that question for myself before I could make any further progress with satisfaction. The discussion of the question from various points of view is to be found in chapters 8, 9, 10, and 15; and of these 8, 10, and 15 were written substantially as they now appear some twelve or thirteen years ago, and are naturally the most polemic in the volume.

Some years again elapsed—years taken up with studies of a different kind, but which contributed their influence to the formation and ripening of opinion—and still I had no theory of the nature of the Beautiful or Sublime, and no definite conviction about a Standard of Taste. My theory and conviction had to be settled as I advanced by the force of the evidence in the facts brought before me and the thought and experience which I could bring to bear upon the facts, and sometimes contrary altogether to what I was inclined to believe. The answer which I have given to the question, Can there be a Standard of Taste? is not the one which I would have given when I began to write on the subject; and my theory of the Sublime, which, as I believe, has distinctive features of its own, has much more resemblance to that of Alison and Jeffrey than I could at one time have believed. But while looking for light in all directions and taking hints from all available sources, I have always sought to be true to the facts of experience, no matter whose opinions I might thereby traverse; and, in doing so, I have been

forced to connect not only the beautiful with the good, but aesthetics with the religious life, especially in sublimity, and sublimity in analysis with our thoughts of God. In fact, it has been the feeling of the irreconcilability of a true aesthetic with any mere materialism, and of its implicate of a Goodness at the Heart of the Universe, that has sustained me for years with undiminished enthusiasm in my studies, and made them at times a joy even almost to agony ; and long before I knew anything of Canon Mozley's now famous sermon on Nature, and even before it was published, I had drawn out an outline of the chapter on "The Universality of Beauty and its Implications," and had it sketched in thought very much as it now stands. In revising the chapter, however, I have inserted a quotation from Mozley as an introduction, and I have had pleasure in noting the influence of his sermon on the theological literature of the times. Since the appearance of that sermon it has come to be fully recognized (though the idea is almost as old as speculation) that there may be a "Natural Theology of Natural Beauty" as well as a Philosophy of Beauty. And the advance of science with its continuous disclosure of the deeper wonders and glories of creation has also, I have no doubt, largely contributed to that result.

In the chapters on the Development of Taste, I have followed independently what has seemed to me the leading of facts so far as they could be got at. But in the preparation of the first chapter especially I

had a difficulty in getting anything that was of any direct help to me on some of the points discussed; and when dealing with the Greeks, I felt how hard it was to write about them without seeming exaggeration on the one hand, or undue depreciation on the other. The mere statement of a thought in relation to them seemed to result in some cases in what might appear to others unfairness or flattery, and each of them had to be avoided as an injustice. And in relation to the whole subject of what the ancients enjoyed in nature, it had always to be considered that merely negative evidence was no evidence; and the question had to be asked whether the comparative want of evidence of the appreciation of the picturesque among them, might not, to a considerable extent, be due to *the want of the picturesque itself*. Is not our joy in it largely owing to the presence of the signs of human life and comfort and our sense of safety? Has the clearing of a country of its wild-wood growth, and the rising of country villas and comfortable farms and farm-houses, with the increase and spread of a free population, nothing to do with our modern love of landscape? Or, have they not rather a good deal to do with it? And is not the landscape consequently which we enjoy, to say nothing of our feeling or sentiment about it, itself to some degree a novelty? It seems to me that when we speak of the comparative want of the sentiment of nature in the ancient classics, we must make allowance for the want of the factors externally which naturally give rise to it, as well as

for the want of a motive for expressing it and the absorption of men in other lines of life and thought. Some of the main influences which retarded the growth of the sentiment I have tried to emphasize when tracing the Development of Taste.

I had thought of adding chapters on "The Relations of Religion, Art, and Philosophy," and "The Place and Power of Art in Education," and perhaps others on other subjects, such as "Physiological Aesthetics"; but a volume has its limits, and so has the patience and the purse of readers, and the thought had to be abandoned.

Finally, in going over such a long and wide field of inquiry, and in dealing with subjects ranging from a taste for beauty in animals to the rationality of the universe as a system, I may have fallen into errors from imperfect information, and may have passed judgments, many of them, that may seem questionable to some, and worse than questionable, false to others; but I have tried conscientiously and with labour to reach the truth, and I only ask my readers to remember that, since to err is human, they may themselves also commit mistakes in their judgments of what I have written.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE LOWER ANIMALS—PREHISTORIC MAN—SAVAGES—THE EGYPTIANS AND ASSYRIANS.

The development of taste a subject of vast extent—But in the present instance limited especially to a taste for the Beautiful in Nature—Where in the scale of creation does a taste for beauty begin to be shown?—The views of Darwin and A. Russel Wallace—The question when considered from a common sense point of view a doubtful one—But, granting a *probable* appreciation of beauty in the lower animals, it must at best be very limited in its range—No doubt, however, of the existence of a taste for beauty when we advance to man—Quaternary artists and savages—Probable limited range of their taste for beauty in nature; and no evidence of the love of the picturesque in prehistoric man, nor in savages, and still less any evidence of the emotion of sublimity—Fear rather than the emotion of the sublime the portion of the savage—But he has also his times of joy, and hence the first beginnings of art—The play-impulse of Schiller and Herbert Spencer—The order of the arts in their rudiments—Egyptians and Assyrians—Fondness of ancient Egyptians for flowers; and some evidence of love of the picturesque in Egyptians and Assyrians—Significance of man in Egyptian art, and religious symbolism of Egyptians and Assyrians compared—No undoubted evidence of emotion of sublimity in Egyptians or Assyrians—Layard's description of an Assyrian palace—But mistakes to be guarded against in our readings of the past—An illustration to the point from modern times—But, though there is no undoubted proof of it, the emotion of sublimity was probably experienced to some extent by the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians—Only probably, for their psalms and hymns do not help us much *Pages 1-26*

CHAPTER II.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE HEBREWS.

The scenes in nature in which the Hebrews delighted—The Song of Solomon, the Psalms, the Prophets, and Ecclesiasticus—The Book of Job invites attention to the wilder scenery of eastern lands, and for a definite

religious purpose—The emotion of the sublime apparently familiar to the author—Testimonies of Longinus, Hegel, Principal Shairp, and Grant Allen to the sublimity of Old Testament Scriptures true but inadequate—The value of the Old Testament for aesthetics to be sought not so much in its direct expression of the sublime as in the stimulus it gives to mental freedom through its great fundamental religious conceptions—The world thought of as a continuous revelation of the ways of God, and consequent incitement to study of nature—The thought of God's presence did not constrain, but gave gladness, and in religious joy we are more receptive of the beautiful—The Great Lyric—The place of Hebrews in the history of aesthetics 27-35

CHAPTER III.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE GREEKS.

The conduct and the art of the Greeks, and their place in the education of the race as it is usually understood—But they educate the conscience as well as the taste artistic—Different opinions about Greek love of nature—What they perceived and had pleasure in of nature's beauties, and Humboldt's opinion on the point—Homer's love of nature and especially of the sea—His descriptions and his similes—But he paints "the horrible and awful" more minutely than the beautiful or the picturesque in nature—Aeschylus—His advance on Homer morally—His rural scenery characteristically grand and picturesque—The beacon lights—Sophocles' rural scenery in contrast to that of Aeschylus, of the lovely, domestic kind—Has frequent references to the sea, and shows a deepening tenderness for flowers and nightingales—Had also advanced in his conception of the drama as a work of art, and morally and theologically was on a higher platform than either Aeschylus or Homer—Euripides—An illustration of his advance in moral feelings beyond both Aeschylus and Sophocles and its significance—Also leads us a step in the development of the taste for natural beauty—*Par excellence* the dramatic poet of the picturesque, and of natural phenomena, the light and rivers most frequently mentioned by him—But also watched the clouds and listened for the voices of the night—The more picturesque aspects of his poetry, and the conclusion to be drawn as to the extent of the Greeks' enjoyment in nature—Theocritus and Moschus give additional details of rural scenery, and are in touch with modern novelists and painters in their picturesque descriptions of the life of the lowly—Comparison of Greeks and moderns in their love of nature—The *Odyssey* and *Erangeline* contrasted—*Erangeline* quoted—Like passing from northern spring to tropical summer 36-64

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE ROMANS.

Taken for granted that the Romans, like other nations, enjoyed certain aspects of nature and that they enjoyed them because they were beautiful—Their

love of landscape—Site of Catullus' house, and sayings of Cicero and Horace—Delight of Romans generally in distinctly rugged landscape—Their joy in the nightly heavens—A comparison of passages ancient and modern—Their observation of clouds and storm-clouds—Ruskin's lecture on the storm-cloud—Lucretius—Character and contents of *De Rerum Natura*—Gives direct expression to the emotion of sublimity—The poet's observation of things minute compared with William Black's—His love of the picturesque, and his sympathy with man and beast in suffering and in joy—By his recognition of law in nature and his polemic against superstition was preparing the way for the people's enjoyment of nature—Speaks of flowers and singing-birds in general, and was more of a philosopher and practical reformer than naturalist or artist—Catullus—Virgil's love of nature and how he paints her for us—But his influence retarded the development of what is called the sentiment of nature—His superstition and its influence in excluding men for centuries from the enjoyment of nature—But while further from us in some respects than Lucretius he is nearer us in others—The poetry of pathos—His representation of love as a sentiment—Had no settled conviction about the gods, but inculcates the duty of resignation—The precursor of Christianity 65-91

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE—ENGLISH LITERATURE.

The influence of Christianity in social life—In art—In sentiment of nature—The personal influence and the teaching of Christ—The personal element in creation—Three stages in the development of the sentiment of nature in English literature—The first the childlike, unreflective stage, and extends from the beginnings of our literature to the end of the seventeenth century—In this stage there is the love of individual objects in their isolation and in abstraction from the rest of the universe as a whole—The Robin Hood Ballads—Chaucer—Spenser—Shakespeare—Milton—His *Comus* and its revival of old-world fears—The influence of such fears in hindering love of nature—The second stage of development, which lasts during the eighteenth century, marked by a dying out of superstitious fear, and a growing love for the picturesque in landscape, and a deepening sympathy with beasts and with man in misfortune, through the rising feeling of the immanence of God—Thomson, Cowper, Burns, and other writers—Mountain and moor in Highland literature—The third stage of development compared with the first and second—God in this stage a felt Presence of Consecration, and the world not a veil to conceal Him, but Himself in manifestation—Intensity of modern sentiment of nature—The causes which give rise to it 92-122

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN TIMES.

Is the order in which the mental faculties develop in the individual a condensed epitome of the order of their development in the race?—Difficulties of the theory—But an analogy at all events between “ontogeny” and “phylogeny”—The facts as to the development of taste in the individual, and the order in which they occur—The taste of the child and the uncultured, though immature, in unison relatively with that of the adult—M. Perez's *First Three Years of Childhood*—An experiment with children—They have little appreciation of the beauty of landscape as such—Precocity in taste perhaps shown by Kingsley and Ruskin—But, taking typical cases, children show wonder enough, but not emotion of sublimity—Objection from Wordsworth's “Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”—Answer from Wordsworth himself—De Quincey on Wordsworth's boyhood—Emotion of sublimity comparatively late in Wordsworth's experience as in that of us all, and when it came, gave a deeper love of nature and an interest in things however common—Development of taste in individual compared with that of the race, and both still in progress 123-139

CHAPTER VII.

CAN THERE BE A STANDARD OF TASTE?

The question an important one; and the logical results of *De gustibus non disputandum est*—The question a difficult one from the apparent great diversity of tastes and the way in which it is usually put—Jeffrey's view with its merits and its failure—An advice of Ruskin—Hume's view with its merits and its failure—Buffier and Reynolds' view ludicrously inadequate, but has a great truth in the heart of it—Inadequacy and worth of Emerson's view—An objective standard neither possible nor desirable—But principles unescapable—Questions relative to nature and art—Art and nature not to be opposed; for art may be as natural as a blade of grass, and as much a work of God 140-157

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF BEAUTY AND DIFFERENCES
OF TASTE.

How have we come to think of anything as beautiful?—A common sense answer—But the question to be understood must be considered in the light of philosophy—Hume, Reid, Alison, Jeffrey, and Herbert Spencer—Their philosophy of beauty in epitome—General objections to their view—But the association theory not so easily disposed of as some would seem to think; nor is it likely to become old-fashioned and out of date; and we must consider it on its polemic and then on its constructive side—Arguments

against the idea that beauty is a real inherent quality of things external—
 (1) The variety of objects to which beauty is ascribed—(2) Want of agree-
 ment among men individually and nationally as to what is beautiful—(3)
 That the beauty of objects changes with change of relations—The logical
 consequences of the course of argument in aesthetics, ethics, theology, and
 philosophy—Right as to many of the facts, but wrong in argument—
 Argument from variety of objects called beautiful turned against associa-
 tion theory—Must have beauty to begin with if the principle of association
 is to have anything to act upon—Flux and association—Argument from
 want of agreement turned—Objection anticipated—Quotations from
 Addison and Burke—Progress in taste an argument against rather than
 for association theory—Have been arguing on the supposition of an irre-
 concilable diversity of tastes; but must ask, Is the diversity as great as
 has been represented?—Agreement of tastes among individuals—and
 among nations—Art of universal and perpetual significance—Third argu-
 ment of associationists examined and turned against them—The full
 mental perception overlooked 158-191

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASSOCIATION THEORY—ITS TRUTH AND ITS INADEQUACY.

Ruskin's view of the theory—The truth which the theory contains—First
 objection to it, that it involves the absurdity of supposing that there was
 no beauty in the world till the principle of association came into operation
 in animals or in man—And yet also it presupposes the beauty which it
 tries to account for by association—Rests on the presupposition of a trans-
 mutation of agreeable experiences into ideas of the beautiful—The out-
 come of the supposition in opposition to facts; and Spencer's form of the
 theory has no advantage over the individualistic theory of Alison and
 Jeffrey—The beauty seen in objects not in proportion to agreeable experi-
 ences with them—Supposed counteractive experiences of no avail in the
 question—Confusion of thought in the theory—Supposed illusion in lovers'
 visions considered—Supposed *giving* of beauty to forms fallacious—A law
 of transmutation of agreeable experiences into ideas of beauty asked for—
 The theory confounds the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime,
 and the confusion illustrated by quotations from Jeffrey—But Jeffrey
 quoted in answer to himself—An element of truth in Alison's theory
 which Jeffrey failed to see, and a distinction which Alison overlooked—A
 passage from Herbert Spencer about the primitive man and the pictur-
 esque examined—An admission to associationists, but of no actual value
 to them 192-219

CHAPTER X.

THE REALITY OF BEAUTY AND THE RELATIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

Two irrational claims—Quotation from Locke's *Essay on Human Under-
 standing*—The argument to be met stated at length, and Berkeley cited

in support of it—Answer to argument from idea of universal flux—Objection anticipated—Reality of knowledge and knowledge of reality—Answer to Mansel's argument from supposed change in shape and refractive power of the eye—Use of magnifying glasses and testimony of senses—Knowledge relative, but beauty not merely phenomenal—Sir John F. W. Herschel quoted in answer to Locke—Supposed change of perception with change in ourselves further considered—Reality of objects perceived—Not only all knowledge, but all being relative; and the possibility of thought the measure of the possibility of things—Relativity of knowledge does not exclude, but includes and guarantees, reality . . . 220-247

CHAPTER XI.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAUTIFUL, AND ITS RELATION TO SOME ALLIED FORMS OF PERCEPTION AND THOUGHT.

The points that have been settled in the preceding chapters—But what is beauty? it will be asked; and the question is comparatively an unimportant one, and, however answered, does not affect the reality of beauty as seen—Absurdity of the demand for a definition of beauty in the abstract—A quotation from Kant relative to definition—Definitions of beauty that have been given not so much wrong as inadequate; and several of them quoted—Proposed change of question from What is beauty? to What is the beauty of this or that object?—By such a change the problem removed in a measure from the sphere of metaphysics and put into the hands of specialists, and an answer made practicable, and the true and the beautiful seen in their connection—The change also enables us more clearly to see and appreciate the large amount of truth in some of the most ideal of speculations—Illustrations to that effect given—Point of criticism to which some spiritualist views are open—The beautiful one in concept, but diverse in kind in the concrete—Beauty affords disinterested pleasure and gives rise to a divine discontentment; and so is connected with the good and the useful, with which it is frequently in inseparable union—We want others to enjoy it with us; and in final analysis it is expressive of sociability and sympathy—In nature it is expressive of the sociability and sympathy of the Absolute Spirit—Its function to please . . . 248-272

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEAUTIFUL, THE PICTURESQUE, AND THE SUBLIME.

Failure of attempts at classification—But the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Sublime may each be distinguished from the other—Grading of the Beautiful generally, beginning with the Pretty—The word Pretty may be applied to objects of all sorts and sizes, but Beauty demands, in some cases at least, the normal size of the species, and it is not limited merely to objects of sense—The Picturesque has reference directly or indirectly always to the eye—Implies a considerable extent in the field of vision, a certain degree of ruggedness, and usually also of prominence of variety in aspect—And also some sign of animation past or present, some form of

life or motion—And hence the explanation of beauty in imperfection and decay—Passing by gradation from things to thoughts, from matter to mind—Grandeur to be distinguished from Sublimity, and Sublimity analyzed—Our account of Sublimity enables us to explain why the same thing should give rise to the emotion at one time and not at another, and also our growing sense of sublimity in modern times—When realizing sublimity we are in contact with a kindly, pure, and elevating Power—Illustrations of distinction between what may occasion or give rise to the emotion of the sublime and what actually constitutes the sublime in thought—But we do not when under the emotion consciously realize all that is involved in it; and the emotion to be distinguished from the perception of the sublime or the sublime itself—Yet easy to see how the emotion of the sublime has come to be identified with the sublime itself—But no object and no action in itself sublime—Our perception of the sublime not the result of association, but of an increased power of interpretation; and nothing almost, however apparently insignificant, that may not give rise to the emotion—The universe one of which the life of the whole is in every part 273-298

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS.

That Beauty is not an accident, but of the essence of nature—Everywhere present to the eye, and through all the seasons—In the heart of objects and of the earth itself—In water (in even a splash made by a drop), and in atmosphere and ether; and in all worlds known, and in the relations between them—But not only an infinity of extension, but an infinity of intensity and complexity also to be taken into account, and beauty to be thought of in worlds suggested by sense and science but imperceptible—In the laws of the cosmos which exist as mathematical relations—The idea of it also involved in the constructive skill of bird and beast—And in the language and customs, and in the moral and spiritual life of man—The more we are developed mentally and morally the more do we demand and delight in beauty in all relations—And all these facts seem to imply that beauty enters essentially into the make and constitution of the universe, and that it is co-existent and co-extensive with material and spiritual being—Tyndall quoted in authority on the point, and the bearing of his remarks on the theories already discussed—A new series of questions arises: (1) What existence have laws of nature?—Opinions quoted—Helmholtz on the question, and his judgment adopted as approximately true—(2) Must things be in reality as we must think them to be?—Only consistency needed for the settlement of the question—(3) Does God love the beauty which we enjoy?—The question may seem beyond our grasp, but practically and in reality easy of settlement—Objection by A. R. Wallace to the idea of the Creator's love of beauty being analogous to ours—Answer—Law cannot account for beauty—Nor can sexual selection—Nor can utility in natural selection—Questions as to the use of beauty discussed—All the facts considered seem to involve the supposition of beauty and of a taste for beauty from everlasting 299-332

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY AND THE EXISTENCE
OF THE UGLY.

Many things ugly as commonly viewed, and yet there may be nothing which has not a relative beauty of its own—Things repulsive to the naked eye may yet be beautiful when looked at through the microscope—And things abhorrent to people generally may have a charm to naturalist and philosopher—Ugliness, like beauty, relative; and what seems ugly to us may be seen to be beautiful by other orders of creatures—Hence it may be, as it has been, concluded that all is supremely beautiful—Apparent contradiction between such a conclusion and the view that many things are ugly; but the contradiction only apparent—Extension of the view of an all-beautiful universe to moral evil—Answer to the objection that the views expressed make Christian effort suicidal and sin a necessity to every personality—The ugly, morally and otherwise, necessary in reality as in thought for the perception of the Beautiful—But does not such a view make sin a constituent part of the universe eternally and abolish it as sin?—Answer—And if sin be a condition for the attainment of the highest good, must it not be a thing that God must desire, and does He not thereby become in thought the only evil-doer?—Answer—Creation not excluded by the view we have taken—Nor is it optimistic any more than pessimistic—But it makes the Real the Rational in a system of progression 333-356

CHAPTER XV.

COLOUR: WHAT IS IT?

Bearing of the question on the view of beauty we have advocated, and an answer required to obviate objections—Objected to the common idea of colour being a quality of outward objects that all the various phenomena of colour may be produced by excitation from within or stimulus from without, without the presence of any coloured object to cause them—Answer—Objected that, as the appearance of colour may remain in the eye after the object has been removed or turned from, the colour cannot have been any quality of it—Answer—Objected that objects change their colour and are seen to be differently coloured in different lights—Answer—Objected that we do not see colours in the dark—Answer—Possible objection from the fact that we can conceive of colour only in and through the thought of light—Answer—Objected that colour is only a mode of motion—Answer—Inconsistency of scientific language about light—Inseparability in thought of colour and extension—Some reasons in brief for thinking that colour is not a sensation, and answers to objections—Authors on our side of the question with whose company we are satisfied 357-392

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE, IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: LOWER ANIMALS—PREHISTORIC MAN—
SAVAGES—EGYPTIANS—AND ASSYRIANS.

THE development of taste, in the individual and through the ages, is a subject of vast extent, and of great variety and complexity in its details; and for a thorough and exhaustive treatment of it, it would require not one, but many writers, each of them a master in his own department of art or branch of knowledge, and not a few chapters only, but volumes of patient industry and learning. For taste, as the faculty of appreciatively discerning what is beautiful, has to do with all departments of thought and with every sphere of life, and there is almost no relation in any sphere in which it may not be shown—in action and dress; in speech and behaviour; by our preferences and aversions in the house or out of it; in our manners and customs social and political; by architecture and sculpture and poetry and painting; and in every way, in short, in which we can express ourselves in society, or utter our emotions or our thoughts, may we make known what are our tastes, and where we stand in culture and civilization. And, in that way

of it, the history of the ages, since the first appearance of life on our globe, is the history of the development of taste within them ; and the records of progress are but the records of the advancing perceptions of truth, of goodness, or of beauty.

But our subject is of much more limited extent than the progress of taste, in the widest sense of it, from the beginning of life on our globe to the present moment. That would be beyond alike our ambition and our power. Our aim will only be to indicate, in a broad and general way, the development of a taste for the beautiful, especially in external nature. We will not, of course, exclude the consideration of all phenomena in other spheres of taste. On the contrary, we shall seek to indicate as we go along some points of progress in art and morality, and the general widening of the thoughts of men. But our main business will be to note the widening and growing intensity of a love for the beauty and grandeur of the outward, material world as distinguished from man and his works. And, having done that, we may be in a better position to consider with advantage various other questions relative to beauty which should be of interest to all, but especially to inquirers in philosophy and theology.

Without further preamble, then, and without raising any question in the meantime as to what beauty is, or of how we come to perceive it at all, we may ask, where in the scale of creation does a taste for beauty begin to be shown ? Is it confined to man, or do we share it with the lower animals ? And if we do share it with them, with which of them do we share it ? With them all, or with only a few ? And if with only a few, what are the few in particular ? And the questions, it must be confessed, are, like many of their kind,

more easily asked than answered. Darwin's theory of sexual selection, of course, rests mainly on the idea of a conscious choice by the females of particular males for some superiority of attraction in colour, or form, or odour, or voice; and the idea of an appreciation of beauty in the lower animals is, at least when applied to birds, an old one and a common one among common people, and we find it expressed, for instance, (and Darwin's idea also of sexual selection) by Addison,¹ by Thomson in his *Seasons*,² and by Dr. Thomas Reid in his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*.³ But whether it is involved in the facts, or supposed-to-be facts, adduced in support of it, is a different question and a doubtful one. The great naturalist himself, notwithstanding his frequent seeming assurance and his elaborately detailed illustrations in *The Descent of Man*, is yet wavering and contradictory in his exposition of his theory; and his rival naturalist, Wallace, is emphatic in his assertion that there is really not a particle of evidence in its favour, and he regards it with great distrust as a delusion and a snare.⁴ His own idea is that the "frequent superiority of the male bird or insect in brightness or intensity of colour, even when the general colouration is the same in both sexes," is primarily due, not to sexual selection, but "to the greater vigour and activity and the higher vitality of the male"; and he believes that the varied colours of animals have also an important purpose and use "in the facility it affords for recognition by the sexes or by the young of the same species, and that it is this use which probably fixes and determines the colouration in many cases." In short, he does not believe in sexual selection at all, but only

¹ *Spectator*, No. 412.

² "Spring," 611-627.

³ Essay 8, c. 5.

⁴ *Tropical Nature and other Essays*.

in natural selection as a means of advancement in beauty.

But let us look at the question for a moment from a simply philosophic and common-sense point of view. That animals, from snails and earth-worms to butterflies and birds, have what may be called their preferences for soil and food and general surroundings is not to be denied; and that they have a perception of differences and likenesses in things is certain from their associating with those of their own kind and their fleeing from their foes, and by their every movement, in fact, in a world of varied forms and appearances. But the same things may be said of the lowest of creatures which have life and locomotion; and even things that are lifeless—the chemical elements for instance—show what may be also metaphorically called their preferences and aversions in their union, or disinclination to unite, with a given compound. In fact, we cannot conceive of a world at all without the underlying assumption of a distinction of elements, of difference that is to say, to begin with, nor of animals without association of them into classes and kinds, which already implies within them some perception of likeness and unlikeness, and preference for their kind, and for certain food and surroundings. But, when all that is given, we have still to settle the question whether any insect, bird, or beast has any appreciation of beauty as such and any interest in it *for its own sake*, which is characteristic of all aesthetic pleasure. And the question is not settled by taking the “*high priori*” road with Darwin and saying that, if the female among birds and beasts is not moved by beauty, the fuss made by the male in attitude and sound at the pairing season is *purposeless*, and the brighter colours of the

males *without a reason*; for, to say nothing of the arguments advanced by Wallace, we know too little as yet of the reasons of things to dogmatize thus on song and colour and the spreading of wings and tails. Birds, as we know, sing out of the pairing season, and even when alone and blind; and bees and butterflies are found most numerous, not among the prettiest flowers, but where there is the largest supply for their wants—among thistles in flower, and blooming lime trees, and heather and clover, and the like. And as to the experiments of Sir John Lubbock which show the preferences of ants and bees for certain colours, we need hardly say that they come far short of demonstrating a taste for beauty. And it has to be specially noted, as we have already observed, that Darwin, notwithstanding his lengthy and sometimes positive arguments for a taste for beauty in insects and other animals, yet allows, when speaking of birds and the exhibition of their plumage, that “it is difficult to obtain direct evidence of their capacity to appreciate beauty.”¹ And if it is difficult with birds, it is still more difficult with beasts and insects.

Granting, however, a *probable* appreciation of beauty for beauty's sake in insect, bird, and beast, it is an appreciation, it must be allowed, which is at best very limited in its range. If birds admire the colours and forms of feathers, it is an admiration apparently of only those of the same species, and only when they are pairing. The colours of kingfisher and humming-bird may be equally brilliant, but there is no reason for believing that the one has any appreciation of the loveliness of the other, or that either of them sees any

¹ *Descent of Man*, c. 14, p. 413, second edition.

splendour in the grass or glory in a flower. In their case the taste for beauty, if it exists at all, is more of a momentary perception through sexual desire than a deliberate judgment or disinterested choice of beauty for its own sake, and that makes their taste for beauty, if it exists, a very doubtful quantity ; and yet, judging from the beauty of some of them, and thinking of it as the result of sexual selection, they should have the very perfection of taste in colour—which again we may feel at liberty to deny.

But, whatever may be the case with beast and bird, when we come to man we pass at once apparently from the region of probability and conjecture to that of certainty on the general question. From the earliest dawn of childhood and of history we have sure indications of a taste for beauty. The merest babe is drawn to brilliant colours ; and prehistoric man comes before us not as a mere animal with a mate in a lair and content if he had only food, and shelter from foes and wind and weather, but more or less like a gentleman with some degree of artistic feeling, and with the power of expressing it in representations of mammoth, and deer, and other animals, and with a fondness for ornament for the person, and on weapon, and on vessels for domestic use, and so forth. “Armed with their point of flint, the quaternary artists engraved in turn the bone and the antlers of the rein-deer, ivory from the mammoth, and stones of different kinds. Sometimes they endeavoured to reproduce the plants or animals around them ; at other times they followed their own fancy, and made designs of ornamentation, in which we meet with almost all the principles re-invented many centuries afterwards. The multiplicity and the variety of this kind of engraving show much imagination and

a real faculty of invention.”¹ And the same tendencies have been continued in their representatives of modern times, and perhaps in an intensified degree and with some advancement in their fondness for dress and gaudy colours. “Savages,” says Sir John Lubbock, when speaking of existing tribes, “are passionately fond of ornaments. In some of the very lowest races, indeed, the women are almost undecorated, but that is only because the men keep all the ornaments themselves. As a general rule, we may say that south-erners ornament themselves, northerners their clothes. In fact all savage races who leave much of their skin uncovered delight in painting themselves in the most brilliant colours they can obtain. Black, white, red, and yellow are the favourite, or rather, perhaps, the commonest colours.” And “round their bodies, round their necks, round their arms and legs, their fingers, and even their toes, they wear ornaments of all kinds. . . . Nor are they particular as to the material; copper, brass, or iron, leather, or ivory, stones, shells, glass, bits of wood, seeds, or teeth—nothing comes amiss.”²

What degree of appreciation of the beauties of things around him in nature prehistoric man may have had, we of course can have no direct means of knowing. His attempts at engraving mammoth and stag show an eye and memory for animal form and species, but his interest in them is likely, we should say, to have been more sensuous and selfish than aesthetic. The drawing of an animal is in itself no sure sign of a taste for its beauty; it may mark only an interest in it as a chief supply for food, or, perhaps, as has been sug-

¹ Quatrefage's *Human Species*, book 8, c. 27.

² *Origin of Civilization*, c. 2, second edition.

gested, it may have had something to do with religious worship. "The fishes, reindeer, and mammoths carved on their bone implements," says Principal Dawson, "were not merely works of art, undertaken to amuse idle hours. As interpreted by American analogies, they were the sacred totems of primeval hunters and warriors, and some of the rows and dots and scratches, which have been called 'tallies,' may be the records of offerings made to these guardian spirits, or of successes achieved under their influence."¹ But, allowing for the influence of selfish interests and religious ideas, it is still probable that our prehistoric ancestors were early attracted by the colours of flowers and the plumage of the more distinctly brilliant birds, and their song would be noted as signs of the seasons and of coming broods. In the myths of dawn and sunset, and of the changing seasons, we have indications of their interest in the different aspects and colours of the sky, and in the return of the seasons; and the necessities of shelter and of a living would naturally lead them, *nolens volens*, to roam through green retreats, by rivers' banks, and along the shores of open seas. And the same things may be said of their modern representatives in the lowest tribes and nations as well as in the highest. Those who are dependent on the chase for their means of subsistence have naturally an intimate acquaintance with the colours, and forms, and habits of birds and beasts, and with the signs of the weather in the appearance of sky and cloud; and they may choose for their encampments those spots which by their lie and vegetable growths are picturesque and lovely, for there fish, or birds, or beasts are usually to be found, and men must try to live, be their tastes aestheti-

¹ *Fossil Man and other Modern Representatives*, p. 286.

cally what they may. But there is nothing in what has been discovered by archaeologists, nor in what has been written by travellers, so far as we know, to indicate in prehistoric man, or in the lower savage nations of to-day, any choice of a picturesque locality for the sake of its picturesqueness and apart from the interests of food, or shelter, or defence. That the lowest even of existing tribes may have some faint perception of the beauty of landscape seems *a priori* probable, and we are ready to believe it of them. But travellers, missionaries, and others have not, so far as we are aware, made this a point of observation and remark; and so we are left practically in the dark about it. And if we have no direct proof of appreciation in savage tribes for landscape on its own distinct and separate account, we have still less anything to indicate among them any true emotion of sublimity. We might naturally think that they would manifest the emotion in a pre-eminent degree—that above all the people of the more civilized nations they would have an awe from the mystery of things around them. But while they may have superstitious fears enough, they have not thought or knowledge enough, we should say, for the proper perception of mystery at all; for mystery is proportionate, let us remember, not to ignorance, but to knowledge. All things are plain to ignorance; there is no mystery to it, for there is little perceived; and only with advancing knowledge, from the perceived complexity of things in their inter-relations and suggestiveness, does mystery begin. And with the development of the perceptive, the emotional, and the imaginative powers, with the reading of poets and acquaintance with art in general, with the growth of science and religion, and in proportion to the grasp of the mind and the fulness and

intensity of the heart, do men realize what an overwhelming glory and mystery this universe is, and stand accordingly in awe and exaltation. Fear may spring from ignorance, but growing knowledge deepens adoration: and it is not to the past but to the future that we must look for the paradise of the philosopher or the man of God.

Whatever, then, may actually be the case, we have not as yet any direct evidence that the savage has any admiration for the beauty of landscape for its own sake, and there is little probability of his having any true perception of sublimity. Fear enough he may have, and does have, and a belief in spirits and in an after life, it may be; but his fear—fear of enemies and of unseen powers—is such as *effectually to exclude*, we might say, not only the emotion of sublimity, but any true delight in landscape beauty. For in the scene which is before him may be foes innumerable, though unseen, and these will have an interest to him far surpassing stream or tree. “The savage,” says Sir John Lubbock, “is always suspicious; always in danger; always on the watch. He can depend on no one, and no one can depend upon him. He expects nothing from his neighbours, and does unto others as he believes they would do unto him. Thus his life is one prolonged scene of selfishness and fear. Even in his religion, if he has any, he creates for himself a new source of terror, and peoples the world with invisible enemies.”¹ And they are very many and very great, those enemies of his. The dread of evil manitous, according to Dawson, “often filled the poor savage with extreme terror, and embittered his life with the apprehension of the ills that might be inflicted on him

¹ *Prehistoric Times*, c. 14.

by those mysterious powers. In some cases, more especially, those superstitious terrors were excessive, and took possession of whole tribes, impelling to actions of folly and cruelty equal to those of our own ancestors in darker days, when they became afflicted with a witch panic or with dread of the evil-eye."¹ And such fear is not characteristic of only the lowest and earliest tribes, but of peoples also that are comparatively advanced in civilization, and that are coming into contact with the culture of to-day. "The Bhootas," we are told, "hang rags on the shrubs by the wayside to frighten away demons, and put out handfuls of rice to please the evil spirits which, they believe, infest the woods and hills."² And having such beliefs about the woods and hills, they can hardly be expected to look on them with much æsthetic pleasure.

The freedom of the "noble savage" may thus be seen to be a very limited quantity; and it would be seen to be still more limited if we would keep before us the facts which prove his superstitious subjection to innumerable rules and customs.³ And all such things must interfere with his enjoyment of the beauties of nature, or the beauty properly of anything. For relaxation and mental freedom as well as emotional and intellectual development are needed for any considerable degree of æsthetic pleasure.

But while, from his enemies in man and beast, and his natural superstitions, fear may be more his portion than freedom, it is not to be supposed that the savage has not also his times of joy. There may be next to

¹ *Fossil Men and their Modern Representatives*, p. 275.

² *The Church of Scotland Missionary Record*, March, 1884, p. 490.

³ Lubbock's *Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man*, c. 9, second edition.

none of it in his home, for "true love," it would seem, "is almost unknown among them," and conversation with woman is not descended to—"husband and wife never laughing or joking together." But after a successful chase, or fishing expedition, or a victory in battle, or in the expectation of success, and when the mood of conquest is on them in congress, they may grow wild with an excitement proportionate to their private and usual moodiness; and their joy then appears instinctively, like that of children, in animated action, with corresponding vocal utterance—in which are the first rudiments of music and the dance, and, in a fainter measure, perhaps, of poetry in song. And these are in all probability prior in their origin to architecture and sculpture and painting in even their barest rudiments. The earliest abodes of men were probably thickets and hollow trees, and overhanging rocks, and dens and caves of the earth; and before the troglodytes with pointed flint had first artistically scratched the mammoth on tusk or bone or slab, they had no doubt rejoiced in the warmth and light of the sun, and shouted or sung in pleasure, and clapped their hands, and repeated the sound of bird and beast, and imitated their movements when they thought of them and talked of them among their companions. And if at any time they did these things consciously, and with a view to their own disinterested joy, or that of others, they showed in their utterances and movements the faint beginnings at least of music and poetry as arts in the proper sense of the word. And thus some of the highest and the most expressive of the arts would be also the earliest in their origin, as certainly they are the most widely known and enjoyed.

In fact, while men may exist without architecture

or sculpture or painting in even their faintest rudiments, we can hardly conceive of them as existing socially without the capability of joy and merriment, and the expression of their emotions by the voice and in action ; and these capabilities of joy with their resultant and accompanying emotions give us, in their union with reason, the spring and impulse, the origin of all art as beautiful. In their union with reason, we say ; for art as such is not the outcome of only the play-impulse in any ordinary meaning of the words. A well-fed kitten has more of the play-impulse than a man, and a lamb in full health and in fine weather is certainly not behind him in respect of it ; but the fine arts are the property of only man. As arts they demand not only impulse, but forethought and conscious operation for a given end in beauty. The play-impulse by itself may give rise to action, but not to art, and still less to the fine arts. The impulse wants direction ; and a taste for the beautiful and the perception of beauty are already presupposed in the attempt to express them. The *spieltrieb*, which is itself the result of physical and mental health and overflowing energy, may supply the original motive power ; but its issue in art as such implies an end towards which it has been guided by reason ; and the great works of art are the results of patient industry and of agony of heart and brain as well as of an original and healthful instinct for play. In fact, no mere play-impulse, in any ordinary or intelligible meaning of the words, can afford by itself the slightest explanation of the existence of the beautiful in art in any of its departments. It can appear as a factor in its production only when the perception of beauty and the conception of art and the resolution to realize it have already been given ;

and Schiller, being aware of that, found it necessary, to make his theory apparently rational, to give to play, on the one hand, an extension which divests it of all significance ; and, on the other, a meaning which excludes what is usually meant by it. For "*only that is play*," he says, "which makes man complete and develops simultaneously his twofold nature." And when we say that a man *plays* with beauty "we must not indeed think of the plays that are in vogue in real life, and which commonly refer only to his material state." For reason affirms "that man shall only *play* with beauty, and he *shall only play* with beauty," that he "only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and *he is only completely a man when he plays*."¹ There is a meaning—we can catch a glimmer of reason—in these averments of the poet ; but he leads us very much into cloudland and unintelligibility when seeking to make art intelligible ; and there we may leave him and his followers while we return to the sphere of history.

Music and poetry, then, which may be said to be contemporaneous in origin and development, and which are one with the "music of the spheres" and the original rhythm of creation, we conceive to be the earliest of the arts in their rudiments. But, for very manifest reasons, they are not the earliest, but the latest rather, in full development. For how, to begin with, were men to catch the sounds and modulations of the voice in time but for a moment and without conceivable dimensions, and make them stand out in space to be inspected and interpreted by others at their leisure in any coming day or year in the future ? The thing must have seemed as impossible as the painting of the

¹ *Aesthetical Letters*, 15.

wind *with its moaning* would do to us to-day ; and it would continue an impossibility till, with the invention of musical instruments (though at first as only straws or reeds), they could draw the outline of the instrument used as a symbol of their music. And hence picture-writing and hieroglyphics, and hence the sculptured and painted walls (which were also the libraries) of palace and temple and tomb in Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria,—the earliest homes, apparently, of which we have account, of architecture, sculpture, and painting in any well marked meaning of the words. And these as arts come suddenly to view in these nations in large development. Their temples and statues and pyramids are colossal in structure, and they indicate a stage of advancement in art, as well as in mechanical skill, which leaves all savagedom far behind, and is suggestive of generations and ages long continued, though unknown, between simple cave, or cliff, or Swiss-lake dwellings, and such marvellous monuments of culture and civilization. And yet, notwithstanding the time that must have elapsed between them, the quaternary artists seem to have shown as much accuracy and skill in their delineations of animals as Egyptians in their sketches and sculpture which remain to us. And we have evidence too, as we have seen, of the quaternary man's delight in leaves for ornamentation, and so by implication of his perception of the beauty of vegetation. But in Egypt, Babylonia, and Assyria, we have proof of a larger pleasure in vegetable beauty than we have any evidence of in prehistoric man, and signs of at least an incipient delight in landscape. The ancient Egyptians, it would seem, were passionately fond of flowers and of trees for ornamental purposes—so much so, indeed, that “they

even exacted a contribution of rare productions from the nations which were tributary to them; and foreigners from distant countries are represented bringing plants among the presents to the Egyptian king."¹ They had flowers at feast and festival, in bouquets, necklaces, chaplets, and wreaths, as well as presented in single heads to guests as they entered; and so much attention did they give to floriculture, that "neither roses nor violets were absent, even in the depths of winter." And in their pictures of gardens with tree-surrounded ponds in which are aquatic fowl and fish, and of warriors scaling rocks and drawing themselves up by trees to storm the castles built on mountains clothed with forests of pine or fir, and in such like representations, we have undoubted traces among the Egyptians and Assyrians of a delight in natural scenery, and, in a slight degree, in the picturesque proper as distinguished from the simply beautiful. We find it in expression on slab and pillar, as, for example, on the "Monolith of Ashur-akh-bal King of Assyria," and in the "Bull Inscription of Khorsabad."² And the same thing is seen in their "hanging gardens," and in their parks or paradises, as preserves for game, and as fields for the indulgence of the royal taste in hunting. It is true that a man may be "a mighty hunter before the Lord," and have large domains for his pleasure in the chase, without having an eye for beauty or any appreciation of the loveliness of field or forest in itself; but it is hardly credible that a *nation* should thus advance in art and civilization without a perception of the beauty of their possessions and of what they represent pictorially. Their natural

¹ Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i., c. 5.

² *Records of the Past*, vols. vii. and xi.

scenery may yet serve only, or nearly exclusively, as a background for man and his doings; but he is seen to be bringing the things around him into more intimate union with his inner life, and by and by they will be objects of interest to him from their look and appearance simply—for their beauty's sake alone, and apart from any ulterior end.

But there is another advance in taste to be noted in the objects of Egyptian art. There is *man himself*, in stiff and wooden-like conventional attitude and form to be sure, but very prominently and in great variety of relations—domestic, social, civil, military, political, and religious; and that is evidence that he has reached the self-reflective state in which the “life is more than meat, and the body than raiment,” and that he is rising to the possession of himself in the liberty of the spiritual life. In the earlier stages of barbarism an animal is more than a man who is not a relative or ally to his fellowman; and in such a state (their thoughts and inclinations reflecting themselves in their art), men will draw an animal rather than a man—not so much as an object of beauty as an object of selfish interest, an object of food and fun in hunting. But when they begin to burst the bonds of the purely natural life and feel that the life is more than meat, and the man than the animal, their art will, in turn, reflect that change of sentiment and mental attitude, and man will begin to appear in it as an object worthy of regard, and his gods under emblems of the qualities which are held in most esteem. And, judging from their respective symbols of divinity, we should say that, whatever may have been the case with the esoteric religious ideas of the Egyptian priestly caste, the popular religion of the Assyrians, like their delineations of the human frame,

was in advance of that of the Egyptians. The popular religion of Egypt was that of animal worship. Their symbol of divinity might have a human body, but it was almost sure to have the head of beast or bird, as if animal instinct and propensities were more esteemed than reason, and man, in conventional theory, were mentally inferior to the brute. But in Assyrian religious symbolism we have the head and body of a man in union with the wings and tail of a bird enclosed in a circle, representing, according to Layard, supreme divinity; and in other lesser religious types, though not in all, simply the form of man, or the human head on the body of a beast,—as if deity could be only worthily symbolized by pictures of reason, in union with power and swiftness of flight, and guiding them and holding them in check everlastingly. Even a winged, human-headed bull or lion is a more worthy symbol of deity than a lion-headed, or jackal-headed, or ibis-headed man, and is indicative of a growing preference for reason and morality over mere animal strength, or ferocity, or cunning.

Whether the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians had any true emotion of sublimity, or whether it was a common thing among them, we cannot for want of evidence very certainly say. That it was not altogether unknown in their experience might seem *a priori* a thing to be assumed, and statements have been made which reveal such an assumption with a vengeance. "Of awe," it has been said, "of repose, of grandeur in scale and general sense of sublimity, we find enough in Egypt and Assyria."¹ But we are far from sure of it. Of grandeur in scale there may be enough; but of re-

¹ *The Natural Theology of Natural Beauty.* By the Rev. R. St. John Tyrwhitt, M.A., p. 38.

pose we should say, in opposition to all that is usually taught, there is none, unless we are prepared to identify repose with immobility, which is quite a different thing and a lower. And as to awe and general sense of sublimity, they may seem *a priori*, as we have said, as things to be assumed. But what is the proof of their existence at all? That Egyptians and Assyrians believed in a supreme God (though it is a question whether they did) and a judgment to come is no real evidence of the emotion of the sublime. There are plenty of people in the world to-day who hold to these beliefs, of whom we would be slow in saying that they had ever realized what we mean by sublimity; and it is not lightly to be assumed that five thousand years or so, including two thousand years of Christian experience and our enlarged ideas of the world's age and life, etc., have made no appreciable difference in our thoughts and feelings about God and immortality, and it is in our thoughts and feelings about them, and not merely in our belief of their existence, that the origin of the emotion of sublimity in connection with them is to be sought. And as to pyramids and magnificent temples and palaces and gigantic statues, these are not in themselves to be taken as proof that the emotion even existed, much less that it existed in an intensified degree. In their hugeness merely they are more like the freaks of a boyish delight in big erections for the sake of bigness or the display of the mightiness of the builder—the very antithesis of sublimity—than embodiments of the sense of the sublime. And while modern excavators of those mighty remnants of extinct civilization might stand in awe when they brought them again to light and had time and opportunity for quiet reflection on their significance, it has to be remembered that

they were men of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, men of light and learning, with a Christian training and Christian ideas of God and of the world, and that they were awed,—not by the presence merely of statue or temple, which were objects of wondering curiosity only, or of superstitious fear to others, according to their intelligence and their religious beliefs, but,—by the thought of the lapse of ages, with all their changes, socially, politically, and otherwise, since the hands that had sculptured statue and temple had dropped and the eyes that had gazed on them with wonder and admiration had become dull in death. And it is the same with ourselves in view of them as they are now exhibited. If the sight or the thought of them thrills us it is because of our knowledge of *their history*, with all its implied and related changes and conditions, and not because of what is visible merely to the naked eye—which may be grotesque or funny simply to the inexperienced. If they were but of yesterday in all their details, and if we had seen them as they gradually assumed their form under the hands of the artist, they would have no such power to move us. The more nearly contemporary we are with such things and the more familiar we are with them, the less are they likely to affect us. We may admire them, we may think them wonderful; but, in abstraction from the world's life and history, and from the passions and emotions of the heart in sacrifice, they would lack the power of raising strong emotion and imaginative pleasure. In dim cathedral aisles, with “saints and prophets blazoned on the panes,” we may get into the mood, it may be, though all our lives familiar with the sights and sounds around us. But the saints and prophets with their prayers and devotions are in them-

selves a history, and they bring the olden times and heaven around us, fusing past and present in the spirit of devotion. And it is here, if anywhere,—in the fusion of history and art and devotion in the construction of their palaces and temples, that we must look for the evidence by inference and analogy of the emotion of the sublime among the Egyptians and Assyrians. For they too had a history as well as a religion and art; and they lived in what to them was actually, what we illusively call it to-day in relation to ourselves, the world's old age; and though they might not experience the emotion of the sublime as we do in view of nature's grandeur (and we do not believe they did), yet surely, it may be said, the more intelligent at least among them must have sometimes, to some extent, been awed when they passed between monsters emblematic of the attributes of deity, into temple or palace, on whose walls they saw, in sculptured slabs or painted scenes, the history of their kings and country and the emblems of the presence and the power of the Highest Adorable.

Take the description of the interior of an Assyrian palace, as given by Layard, and imagine the impression, as he says, which the halls of such a palace "were calculated to make upon the stranger who, in the days of old, entered for the first time the abode of the Assyrian kings. He was ushered in through the portal, guarded by the colossal lions or bulls of white alabaster. In the first hall he found himself surrounded by the sculptured records of the empire. Battles, sieges, triumphs, the exploits of the chase, the ceremonies of religion, were portrayed on the walls, sculptured in alabaster, and painted in gorgeous colours. Under each picture were engraved, in characters filled up with bright copper, inscriptions describing the scenes represented. Above

the sculptures were painted other events—the king, attended by his eunuchs and warriors, receiving his prisoners, entering into alliances with other monarchs, or performing some sacred duty. These representations were enclosed in coloured borders of elaborate and elegant design. The emblematic tree, winged bulls, and monstrous animals, were conspicuous amongst the ornaments. At the upper end of the hall was the colossal figure of the king in adoration before the supreme deity, or receiving from his eunuch the holy cup. He was attended by warriors bearing his arms, and by the priests or presiding divinities. His robes and those of his followers were adorned with groups of figures, animals, and flowers, all painted with brilliant colours.

The stranger trod on alabaster slabs, each bearing an inscription, recording the titles, genealogy, and achievements of the great king. Several doorways, formed by gigantic winged lions or bulls, or by the figures of guardian deities, led into other apartments, which again opened into more distant halls. In each were new sculptures. On the walls of some were processions of colossal figures—armed men and eunuchs following the king, warriors laden with spoils leading prisoners or bearing presents and offerings to the gods. On the walls of others were portrayed the winged priests, or presiding divinities, standing before the sacred tree.

The ceilings above him were divided into square compartments, painted with flowers, or with the figures of animals. Some were inlaid with ivory, each compartment being surrounded by elegant borders and mouldings. The beams, as well as the sides of the chambers, may have been gilded or

even plated with gold and silver; and the rarest woods, in which the cedar was conspicuous, were used for the woodwork. Square openings in the ceilings of the chambers admitted the light of day. A pleasing shadow was thrown over the sculptured walls and gave a majestic expression to the human features of the colossal forms which guarded the entrances. Through these apertures was seen the bright blue of an eastern sky, enclosed in a frame on which were painted, in vivid colours, the winged circle, in the midst of elegant ornaments and the graceful forms of ideal animals.”¹

A more likely place for the realization of the properly sublime could hardly be imagined, we should say, if only the stranger supposed to enter it were a man of religious sensibility and culture, felt the weight of time and the pathos of history as we do, and were free from superstitious fear as men of light and learning in the Christian Britain of to-day. But that is just where the difficulty lies, and where we are apt to make a mistake in our readings of humanity in the far distant past. We suppose what *we* would have felt if we had been there with our present experience and knowledge, and spiritual freedom and sensibility, forgetting the centuries, with their increase of light and liberty, which have elapsed since then. But according to the best information which we have about them, the Babylonians and Assyrians, like all early and barbarous or half-barbarous peoples, were very superstitious and fearful of spirits everywhere. Stones, and mountains, and clouds, and streams, and trees, etc., were supposed to be the abodes of dormant or inactive spirits, which, unless averted by magical

rite and ceremony, might at any time advance in hurtful action. Vampires and were-wolves and ghosts, and other such fabulous and fearful creatures as were common to the Middle Ages, were popularly believed in; and in some cases, at least, the very forms of their gods, which were sculptured for palace or temple, were there, not to heighten adoration, but to prevent the entrance of the obnoxious demons.¹ And hence Fire and Sun were important objects, and were naturally regarded as divine, because they scared away ghosts and conquered night, the realm of evil spirits, and revealed what was bright and beneficent to man. And with these superstitious fears, which would leave them more or less in perpetual bondage—not in the awe of natural adoration, but in the fear which hath torment, the ideas also of their kings and rulers, with their natural associations of the horrors of war and slavery, would be calculated in representation rather to *repress* than to evoke the emotion of the sublime in the precincts of palace and temple.

We can conceive how as strangers the Assyrians might feel in the palace of their king by the experience of the uncultured in similar circumstances to-day. In telling how she felt on entering Hamilton Palace with its old historic paintings and faces gazing from the walls, a Highland woman remarked to me, "Guid sake! I was perfectly frichtet! I wadna stay yonner for the worl'." With eyes that could see the beauty of each individual picture and gaze into 'the loveliness of field and flowers with pleasure, she yet felt, when in the palace where others would have looked on the pictures in stillness and with glory in their souls, only as in a ghostly realm where awful shapes and visions

¹ Lenormant's *La Magie chez les Chaldéens*, p. 50.

were appearing ; and instead of being raised in quiet rapture, she was simply frightened and repelled. What she saw was not grand nor sublime, but terrible. It was ghosts she was thinking of, not humanity with its toil of centuries, its hopes, and fears, and faith within the infinite ; and she was in fear—"perfectly frichtet." And it would be the same, we suspect, with the mass of the Babylonians and Assyrians when entering as strangers their palaces and temples, not that of sublimity, but terror rather would be their reigning emotion, we should say.

But, while insisting that the remnants of palace and temple do not necessarily give the proof of it, and that it is not to be assumed as a matter of course that they actually had it, we yet think that as their ideas of God and of a life to come were in some respects similar to our own, and as they too, as we have said, had a history and lived in what to them was really what in relation to ourselves we illusively call it to-day, the world's old age, it is an altogether likely thing that at least the thoughtful and more emotional and devout of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, and in proportion as they were free from the vulgar superstitions of ghosts, etc., had their share in the experience of the emotion of sublimity. That they had it to the same extent and in the same degree of intensity as the emotionally devout and poetically inclined and well-informed among ourselves we do not for a moment believe ; but that they were incapable of the emotion, all of them, and had never known it, we can about as little believe. It may be thought perhaps that their prayers and their hymns, which in isolated passages resemble very much some of our Old Testament Psalms, might lead us to be a

little more positive in our averments on the subject. But when we take such passages in their connection, and with the general superstition and degrading beliefs and practices of the times, we do not get so much help in the settlement of our question from those prayers and hymns as we might at first sight imagine. And, so far as we know, the fact remains that we have no clear and indisputable proof of the emotion of the sublime among the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians; and to get any direct and undoubted expression of it we must pass to Jewish literature.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE HEBREWS.

WHEN we pass from the Egyptians and the Assyrians to the Jews in Old Testament times, we find that, like all their predecessors, they had a pleasure in the flowers and fragrance of the fields and gardens, in the changing of the year from winter to summer with the seasons' changing voices, in the light of day and in the starry night, in the clouds of the sky, in flocks and herds, and in other natural and home-like scenes. The Song of Solomon in particular is instinct with joy in the beauty and fragrance of vineyard and flower (ch. ii. 1-2; iv. 11-13). And in the same rich pastoral, doves and flocks of goats at rest on the hills, and sheep from the washing are favourite objects of comparison; and evidence is not wanting in it of delight in the sight of the hills with the prospect which might be obtained from them.

"Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of Mount Gilead." (iv. 1.)

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
With me from Lebanon :
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Senir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens,
From the mountains of the leopard." (iv. 8.)

And in the Psalms, and the Prophets, and the Apocrypha we have evidence of the same joy in the quieter and more domestic aspects of nature. "He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud," says the author of Ecclesiasticus of Simon the high priest, "and as the moon at the full: as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds: and as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer: as fire and incense in the censer, and as a vessel of beaten gold set with all manner of precious stones: and as a fair olive tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress tree which groweth up to the clouds." (l. 6-10.)

But when we turn to the Book of Job we find ourselves in new surroundings—among the wilder scenery of eastern lands; and we are called upon to observe not only the clouds and the sky and the lightning, but also the eagle in its rocky eyrie and the raven and the hawk, jackals and ostriches, and the hind and the wild goat and wild ass and wild ox, and, in the lower flats and among the reeds by the river, the hippopotamus and the crocodile, and the lion also waiting for his prey. We are introduced to all the wildness and grandeur of eastern mountain scenery; and with the play of lightning and the rumbling of thunder around us, we are asked to contemplate the ways of nature and of natural life as evidences of the ways and mysteries of God. Of the ways and mysteries of God; for while in the Book of Job there is an evident familiarity with natural life in its wilder aspects, and with the appearances of the sky and clouds in storm and thunder, it has to be observed

that we are not invited to contemplate these as admirers simply of nature's grandeur, but for a definite religious end and purpose. And while there are some magnificent descriptions of individual objects, of the horse, for example, and the eagle in the 39th chapter, and of the crocodile in the 41st, there is no loving description of an object nor of a landscape for its own sake. There is no passionate contemplation of a scene from the mere aesthetic pleasure of beholding it, and the purpose of the writing is to overawe rather than to awaken the love of the beautiful. It is the wisdom and power, and the mystery of the ways of God as revealed in nature, and not nature's beauty or grandeur in itself that is set before us. We are brought face to face with the sublime; and we are made to feel that the writer must have been familiar with the emotion which he makes us realize. We may have been left in uncertainty by the remnants of their art whether it was known to the Egyptians and Assyrians, but we can hardly doubt that it was known to the author of Job. And yet we are not to lose sight of the possible, the likely differences between the feelings with which we read the book nowadays and the feelings with which it was listened to or produced at first. We should not forget that we go to it in the fulness of the nineteenth century, and that we may be able to see a meaning and a grandeur in it which it had not to its author or to those who first received it. We should not forget that there has been a development of sentiment and emotion with the growth of the ages and the world's life.

But whatever may be the difference between the feelings with which we read it nowadays in our devouter moods and those with which it was spoken or

read in ancient times, there can be no question about the sublimity to us to-day of the language of Hebrew bards and prophets. From Longinus, who noted the sublimity of the saying, "Let there be light, and there was light," men of the most diverse opinions theologically and philosophically have been unanimous as to that. "God is the Creator of the universe. This," says Hegel, "is the purest expression of sublimity." And he quotes from the 104th and 90th Psalms as "classic examples of genuine sublimity."¹ Principal Shairp calls the same 104th Psalm the "crowning hymn of the visible creation," and he declares that it "presents, as has often been remarked, a picture of the entire universe, which for completeness, for breadth, and for grandeur, is unequalled in any other literature."² And Grant Allen believes that "there is more true sublimity in half a dozen Psalms or four chapters of Job than in all the odes of Pindar and all the tragedies of Aeschylus."³ And these testimonies are so far true; but they are incomplete, as they convey to us no idea of the extent to which the sublime is characteristic of the Old Testament Scriptures, when read in the light of our present experience, and especially when read in an evangelical spirit and from the point of view of the older criticism and of orthodox theology. There is sublimity to most of us in the lives of Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah; in the song of Moses and his people over their delivery from the Egyptians, in the song of Hannah, and in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, as well as in the first chapter of Genesis and the Book of Job; in Psalms 8, 19, 23, 33, 34, 36, 102, 103, 139, 145, and 147, as well as in the

¹ *Ästhetik*, vol. i.

² *The Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, pp. 126-7.

³ "The Origin of the Sublime," *Mind*, July, 1878.

90th and 104th ; in the lives and declarations of the prophets, and in the whole Old Testament conception of the history of the children of Israel, as cared for and guided by God. It is found in short sayings and phrases as well as in whole chapters and books, in sayings and phrases like these—" Let there be light, and there was light," " They sank as lead in the mighty waters," " The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it "; and, in fact, we might about as well try to take the blue from the sky for exhibition as to extract from them by quotation their sublimity from the Old Testament Scriptures. It is bound up in them by conception from beginning to end and throughout, and their last declaration is as sublime as their first.

But it is not in its direct contribution to the expression of the sublime that the value of the Old Testament in the historic development of aesthetic perception and pleasure is mainly to be sought. It is rather in its educative influence through the ages, in its tendency to stimulate the whole intellectual and spiritual nature of man and lead him to larger liberty, and so to truer observation, through its great fundamental religious conceptions. Let a man who has arrived at the conception of God as in sympathy with him and caring for him as a friend (and such a conception we may say was involved in the revelation of God as Jehovah),—let such an one but grasp and take home to himself the first statement of the Old Testament in its wide significance and spiritual import, and he will be comparatively free from the superstitious fears of demons which oppressed the old Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, and all primitive peoples as well as those of the Middle Ages, and he will feel himself at

liberty, nay, called upon by all that is in him as a religious being, to take note of and admire the works of God around him, and not only of the works, but of the ways of God in nature; for, in the idea of Psalmists and Prophets, God was not away from His works, as if, after a momentary exertion of His power in creation, He had again withdrawn into an abstract infinitude, or was pleased with only contemplating His works at a distance. He is represented as in them and as revealing Himself by them for ever in creation.

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

(Psalm xix. 1-2.)

He clothes Himself “with light as with a garment”; His voice is upon the waters; “and in His temple everything saith, Glory.”

“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening
to rejoice.

Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it ;

Thou greatly enrichest it ;

The river of God is full of water :

Thou providest them corn, when Thou hast so prepared
the earth.

Thou waterest her furrows abundantly ;

Thou settlest the ridges thereof :

Thou makest it soft with showers ;

Thou blessest the springing thereof.

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ;

And thy paths drop fatness.

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness :

And the hills are girded with joy.

The pastures are clothed with flocks ;

The valleys also are covered over with corn ;

They shout for joy, they also sing.” (Psalm lxx. 8-13.)

The world was thus thought of as a continuous revelation. *Thou* doest it; *Thou* doest *now*. "By His strength He setteth fast the mountains, He stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of the waves, and the tumult of the peoples." And what God has made and reveals Himself by it is for man to take note of and admire; and there is something wrong, something blameworthy, in the man who, with all his faculties about him, does not stand in wonder and in awe of the works of His hands. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of His hands, He shall break them down and not build them up." And so there is a direct encouragement and incitement to study the world as a thing of beauty, and marvellous in its construction; and where there is the deepest feeling of the presence of God and the divinity of the earth, *there* will be, other things being equal, the most passionate love of all that is beautiful in nature and the deepest pleasure in the lonely hills, for when with them we are not away from the source of life, but in living communion with Him, "in whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things."

It is to be observed, and it needs to be emphasized, that the thought of the presence of God did not in any way depress the ancient Hebrews or dispose them to gloom or fear, and so deprive them for the time of mental freedom and elasticity. On the contrary, it filled them with joy—a great joy—and gladness, and disposed them to praise—to music and the dance and the adoption of every means within their power for the demonstration of joy. Even the idea of His coming in judgment gave exultation.

"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice,
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;

Let the field exult, and all that is therein ;
 Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy
 Before the Lord ; for He cometh ;
 For He cometh to judge the earth ;
 He shall judge the world with righteousness,
 And the peoples with His truth." (Psalm xcvi. 11-13.)

And in our happier moods, be it remarked, and especially in our happier religious moods, we are peculiarly receptive of impressions from the beautiful. And so, as a preparation for joy in nature, there could be nothing better for us perhaps than a careful and devoutly contemplative reading of the Psalms.

But there is something more to be observed in connection with Hebrew poetry. The Hebrews, it has been remarked, have given us something apart—"a lyric so different in kind from all other lyrics as to stand in a class by itself. As it is equal in importance to the Great Drama of Shakespeare, Aeschylus, and Sophocles, we may perhaps be allowed to call it the 'Great Lyric.' The Great Lyric must be religious, it must, it would seem, be an out-pouring of the soul, not towards man but towards God, like that of the God-intoxicated prophets and psalmists of Scripture. Even the lyric fire of Pindar owes much to the fact that he had a childlike belief in the myths to which so many of his contemporaries had begun to give a languid assent. But there is nothing in Pindar, or indeed elsewhere in Greek poetry, like the rapturous song, combining unconscious power with unconscious grace, which we have called the Great Lyric. It might perhaps be said that the Great Lyric is purely Hebrew."¹

It will not do, then, when speaking of the Hebrews as the educators of the religious emotions, to leave

¹ "Poetry," by Theodore Watts, *Ency. Brit.*, 9th edition.

them out of account so far as the history of aesthetics is concerned ; for, though they have given us no new ideas in the plastic arts, they have helped, through their sense of sublimity and their ideas of God, to lead us to the enjoyment of nature's grandeur and the love of all that God has made. "The modern world, nursed upon the grand utterances of Hebrew bards, has imbibed the sense of the sublime almost with its mother's milk, nay, one may say, before it. For everyone of us is now born into the world with a hereditary capacity for that mingled feeling of awe and security which constitutes the essence of the sublime,"¹ or rather, we should say, which constitutes the emotion of the sublime—the sublimity itself being as different from the sentiment or emotion produced by it as the sky is from our feelings about it.

¹ Grant Allen, *Mind*, July, 1878.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE GREEKS.

THE Greeks lie next to the Hebrews in the line of the development of thought and taste in modern times; and, as everyone knows, we owe much to them in many ways,—ways which we need not attempt to enumerate. They were pre-eminently the children of the light—the children of the sun. “Sweet is this light of heaven,” they said, “sweet is this light”; and they shrank from the “shadow feared of man,” mainly because in death they went, as they thought, to dreary realms which “the sun never cheered.”

“Yet while some breath
Of life remains, she wishes to behold
The radiance of the sun ('tis her last view),
As never more to see his golden orb.” (Euripides' *Alceſtis*.)

And as children of the sun they lived in the open air and sunshine, and played and danced and sang, and told their tales of their gods, of heroes, and of love. They had a wonderful sense of the physical beauty of the human frame, and, in general, of fitness, of proportion, of symmetry, and of rhythm. It found expression constantly in temple and pillar and statue, and in literary expression and composition. “And, of all the beautiful things which they created, their own language was the first and the most wonderful.” They

have given us epic and dramatic poetry in almost full perfection, we might say. They carried architecture to a higher degree of perfection in some respects than they had found it, leaving us their "orders" as models for imitation. And in sculpture proper and statuary they have never been surpassed—some would say, and some have said, they never will be, and never can be, surpassed.¹ To them too, perhaps, we owe the first beginnings of painting as a separate art; and from Socrates and Plato start our gropings after a philosophy of aesthetics. For these, and for other reasons, it may be said that "to Greece especially was entrusted the cultivation of the reason and the taste."

But we owe them more than that, and more, perhaps, than, with all our appreciation of their varied attainments, we usually give them credit for. The Hebrews have had the credit of being the educators of the conscience, as the Greeks of the reason and the taste; and that may in the main be a true and convenient distinction in the parts they have respectively played in the evolution of the world's life. But, through their literature and philosophy, the Greeks too have had a share in the discipline of the conscience as well as Hebrew poets and prophets; for, if the Hebrews have given us illustrations in abundance in life and literature of the "religious sublime," the Greeks have not been wanting in examples of what may in distinction be called the "moral sublime." The results of crime are portrayed, as we shall find, with terrible power by Aeschylus and Sophocles. But on that we do not in the meantime dwell. Nor do we dwell on the patriotic ardour of the Greeks, and their readiness at times

¹ For an opposite view, however, see Véron's *Supériorité des Arts Modernes sur les Arts Anciens*.

(cowardly though they have been said to be) to sacrifice themselves for the good of their state and country; nor shall we speak of Socrates dying as a martyr to his warning daemon. We now rather refer to such representations of self-sacrificing devotion and determination as we have in the great tragedians. In Prometheus daring the wrath of the gods for the good of mankind, and preserving his secret in spite of direst threats of further punishment, and till swept into the abyss amid hurricane and earthquake and lightning's "blazing wreaths"; in Antigone nursing her poor, blind father in all his wanderings and disgrace with tenderest care, and preferring a tomb alive to violating, by the neglect of her brother slain, "the unwritten laws of God that know not change"; in Alcestis dying in her husband's stead while glorying in the light of life; and in Medea staining her hands with the blood of her sons, whom she loved, for vengeance on her guilty husband, their father, and mocking his agony when he hears of their fate—in these we have illustrations of a grandeur in devotion to a person or a cause unsurpassed, with One Great Exception, in the annals of history, and which prove that the heart in its deepest instincts has an ethics ahead of that of the reason in practice, but which is one with it in its highest and latest determinations, and that "the spirit of philosophy can hardly flatter itself that it can discover anything which has not already been vaguely perceived by sentiment and revealed by poetry."¹ In the case of Medea, of course, the aim of her devotion was a vile and unworthy one; but the strength of will—of free determination—exhibited in her vengeance, taken with her tenderness as a mother, raises her

¹ Schiller's *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical*, "On Grace and Dignity."

aesthetically in grandeur to a level almost with Milton's Satan, who could say to evil, "Be thou my good." And in Prometheus suffering for the good of men and because of his revelations for their happiness and improvement, we have a foreshadowing, have we not, as in the case of the Buddha, of the life of Him who was the Light and the Life of men, and of the law of sacrifice for the world's good, which is the central practical lesson of the Cross? And so if the Hebrews have had a share in the development of the taste artistic as well as of the religious sentiments, the Greeks have had a share in the discipline of the conscience as well as of the taste artistic; and both have had, and still may claim, a boundless influence in the shaping of the destinies of modern nations.

But what of the Greeks in relation to our perception of the beauties of nature—for that more especially is the subject of our inquiry. And the subject is one which demands a patient as well as an impartial consideration; for very extravagant and opposite statements have been made by men of light and leading. On the one hand, we should judge from the writings of some that the Greeks had next to no delight in the beauties of nature, or the loveliness of landscape—never saw them, in fact; and, on the other hand, by the works of others we might be led to think that they had the same pleasure in nature in all her aspects as we have to-day, and were drawn to her wildest scenery in admiration, like the moderns in their holiday rambles or in their sketching or scientific tours. The desideratum still seems to be a calm and impartial exhaustive account of what they actually did think and feel about nature, and what in particular were her features which attracted them. And, taking their

literature as evidence, it might seem that it should not be hard to get. But it is. It has even been a question for discussion whether they saw the colours which we in this nineteenth century see, or whether they were not all colour-blind. ¹

As to the latter point, it may be taken as fairly settled that, whatever may have been the case with individuals (and that some of the Greeks were colour-blind is just as likely as that some of the English are, and a good case has apparently been made out for Homer having been so¹)—but whatever may have been the case with individuals, and while not denying that there may still be a growing delicacy in the perception of shades of colour, the Greeks as a people, and other nations contemporary with them, saw Nature in the colours in which we in general see her, and could draw a distinction between them in her different objects. They saw the sky as blue, we may be sure, and the grass as green as we do; and they had a passionate love, as we have already seen, of the light of heaven. The flowers to them were lovely, and the streams were beautiful, and fountains and groves were wonderful, and zephyr's sighs were pleasing, and the song of birds (that were not "sea-crows") delightful. And as for the evening, they had pleasure in the moon and stars; and the stillness of the night was not without its rapture.

"Aga. What star is that

There sailing?

Att. Sirius in his middle height

Near the seven Pleiads riding.

Aga. Not the sound

Of birds is heard, nor of the sea; the winds

Are hush'd in silence on the Euripus." (*Iphigenia in Aulis.*)

¹ "Colour-Blindness in Relation to the Homeric Expressions for Colour," *Nature*, Oct. 24 and Oct. 31, 1878.

They had a joy too, as these lines suggest, and as is manifest from Homer and Sophocles, in observing the sea in storm and in calm; in watching the heaving of its rolling waves and listening to the breakers' roar, and in tracking the path of the white-sailed ships as they ploughed their way through the shining main. And that they gazed at times with still delight on far out-stretching landscape, and on rugged wooded heights, and craggy ivy-covered rocks, and snow-capped mountain peaks, would seem to be, not only *a priori* probable, but certain, we should say, from various passages in Homer and Euripides, if not from the poets generally. And if Pythagoras, grasping the world in his thought as a thing of beauty and order, could call it cosmos; and Plato, rising to the heights of a divine philosophy, could talk of the things we see as but dim projections or images of the thoughts of God, which are perfectly beautiful and perfectly good, is it at all likely, is it credible, that they could not see a grandeur in the hills, or realize the glory of a summer sunset? Sun and moon and stars not meaning the same to them in thought and connection, would not be perceived by them with the same emotion of sublimity as by the modern astronomer, who can weigh the sun and moon as in scales, and read the history and destiny of the stars; but the heavens after all would *appear* the same to them as to us, though they did not mean the same in thought. And would it be harder for them, can we suppose, to see the grandeur of a mountain than of a poem or a speculation? "How can we imagine," asks Humboldt, "that a race so happily organized by nature, and whose perception of beauty was so intense, should have been unmoved by the aspect of the wood-crowned cliffs, of

the deeply indented shores of the Mediterranean, the varied distribution of vegetable forms, and, spread over all, the added charms dependent on atmospheric influences, varying by a silent interchange with the varying surfaces of land and sea, of mountains and of plain, as well as with the varying hours and seasons? Or how, in the age when the poetic tendency was highest, can emotions of the mind thus awakened through the senses have failed to resolve themselves into ideal contemplation?" And if it should be asked, 'But what then about the marked comparative deficiency in references to the beauties of nature in the Greek poets?' he would answer, "It was not that sensibility to the beauty of nature was absent, where the perception of beauty was so intense; or the animated expression of a contemplative, poetic spirit wanting, when the creative power of the Hellenic mind produced inimitable master-works in poetry and in the plastic arts. The deficiency which appears to our modern ideas in this department of antiquity betokens not so much a want of sensibility, as the absence of a prevailing impulse to disclose in words the feeling of natural beauty."¹ And that in brief is about the true account of the matter, we should say.

But let us take a glance at the Greek poets in succession, and let us see what they actually have to say for themselves in the matter, and how they speak about the appearances of the world around them.

To Homer, "the mother of dawn, rosy-fingered morning," was always an object of wonder and delight, and it is spoken of constantly as if he had risen habitually with the dawn—as indeed the Greeks were in the habit of doing. To him it was a pleasant thing to

¹ *Common*: Poetic Descriptions of Nature.

behold the light of the sun, the splendid, the brilliant light; and while it was mournful to descend to the shadowy land in death where was "pernicious" night, the night of the living, with its moon and stars, was "ambrosial"—divinely beautiful—

"As when in heaven the stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart."¹

Mountains in the *Iliad* are for the most part associated with lions and wolves and boars and hunting expeditions, or with the cutting of trees; but they are also spoken of as shadowy and breezy and leaf-topped, and the mist and the snow on their peaks did not escape the loving observation of the bard. And with him we are never far from the "hoary," "much-resounding," "billowy," "boisterous," "deep-moving," "divine," and "beauteous," "mighty," "fishy" sea. It was known to him in its every aspect, and has been described by him in almost every suitable epithet. In the sunshine of a quiet morning it was lovely, and when roused into fury by the north west wind it was terrible in its might and grandeur. "As when on the echoing beach the sea wave lifteth up itself in close array before the driving of the west wind, out on the deep doth it first raise its head, and then breaketh upon the land and belloweth aloud, and goeth with arching crest around the promontories, and openeth the foaming brine afar, even so in close array moved the battalions of the Danaans without pause to battle."² There was mystery in the

¹*Iliad*, viii. 551-555, Tennyson's translation.

²*Iliad*, iv. 422-428, Lang, Leaf, and Myers' translation.

moving of the waters, and joy in watching the white-sailed ships as they scudded before a favouring breeze. "They erected the mast and expanded the white sails. The wind streamed into the bosom of the sail, and as the vessel briskly ran the dark wave roared loudly around the keel, but she scudded through the wave, holding on her way."¹

It will suffice to refer to such well-known descriptions in the *Odyssey* as that of the cave of Calypso (b. v.), of Nausicaa and her maids at their washing (b. vi.), of the house and garden of Alcinous (b. vii.), of the island of Ithaca (b. ix.), and of the singing of the nightingale (b. xix.), as proof of Homer's love for the quieter beauties of garden and flower and stream and tree, and the song of bird, and the art of man; and we deem it superfluous to say that he affords ample evidence of a close and intimate acquaintance with nature and with natural life, and that he draws his similes from their every sphere and aspect, and depicts the character of places boldly in single epithets. But after reading works like Principal Shairp's *Poetic Interpretation of Nature* it does not seem superfluous to remark that the similes and epithets are not always indications of joy aesthetic in the aspects of nature expressed by them, that "the apt application of pictures from nature may not in the least imply appreciation of the beauty of the pictures themselves," and that "indeed many of the pictures are evidently selected with no eye to beauty but merely to vivid explanation."² Though he frequently, for instance, uses the lion and the boar for similes, we need not think that he saw much beauty in them. And we have to make the

¹ *Iliad*, i. 480-483, Buckley's translation.

² Dr. Abbott's *Through Nature to Christ*, c. vi.

confession, as a necessary qualification to what we have been saying and to show the difference between his taste and ours, that, while he evidently had an eye for the beautiful and the picturesque in nature, he had a greater fondness still, much greater, for minute descriptions of the "horrible and awfu'." He speaks with greater zest of the amours and quarrels and deceit of the gods than of sky, or mountains, or flowers, or rocks, or streams, or trees ; and it was manifestly more in accordance with the likings of his times to have ghastly details of the slaughter of men, and to hear of the eructations of a cyclops gorged with human flesh and the boring out of his eye by Ulysses, than to listen to the song of brook or bird, or to picturesque descriptions of natural scenery. To the suitors of Penelope the fight of the beggars (*Odyssey*, b. xviii.) was more pleasing than a sunset apparently, and to the bard it would seem it was more congenial than the light of moon or stars. It was the fashion of the times ; and the times were lawless ; and men were cruel without knowing it and liars without shame ; and might was right among gods and men.

But "the thoughts of men are widening with the process of the suns" ; and when we advance to Aeschylus, we find that a magnificent as well as a most significant change has come over the spirit of their dreams. There is now no longer lawlessness in the spirit realm, but a rule of righteousness embracing both gods and men, it would seem (though sometimes it is said that Destiny is fixed by Heaven and that all things are by Zeus), and involving inevitably fearful consequences to criminals and all the unholy. For "the base of Justice is planted firm, and Fate, that forges the sword, prepares it for the deed and brings

into the house a new offering of ancient murders, and time-honoured Erinnys avenges the stain" (*Choephoroi*).¹ And "in appointed time and day every mortal who despises the gods shall pay the penalty" (*Suppliants*).

" But Justice doth the smoky cell
Illumine with celestial sheen,
And loves with honest worth to dwell;
Riches amassed with hands unclean
Forsaking with averted eyes,
To holy innocence she flies;
Wealth she despiseth, falsely stamped with praise,
And to their fated issues all things sways." (*Agamemnon*.)

"Therefore let everyone honour duly the sanctity of parents and reverence the intercourse of hospitable abodes. He who is willingly just without necessity shall not be unhappy; utterly destroyed, at least, he can never be" (*Eumenides*). And the dogging of the murderer by the Furies is most powerfully portrayed and with terrible emphasis. But there are at least two notes in Aeschylus of perhaps even a higher, though much gentler, moral strain, and which should bring him still nearer to the heart of the Christian. "But do thou," says Agamemnon to Clytaemnestra when putting Cassandra under her care, "do thou with kindness conduct within this stranger maid: God from afar graciously regards him that is mild in victory. For no one willingly submits to the yoke of slavery." That surely is near to the sentiment which led to slavery's abolition. And this reminder is still much needed among us: "For neighbours to speak ill of one deformed is far from proper, and justice is absent from it" (*Eumenides*). And we hear from him that "to be free from evil thoughts is God's best gift."

¹ The prose translations from Aeschylus are Buckley's (Bohn's series); those in verse are Anna Swanwick's.

We are raised by Aeschylus to a world unknown to Homer, and are made to feel in ways sublime that there is a moral order which cannot be violated with impunity. We pass from arbitrariness among gods and men to a necessity in the rule of righteousness universally, to a moral necessity inherent in the nature of things. And he keeps us at a lofty level also in material things. His delights are not with meadows chiefly, nor with brooks and groves and singing birds. He condescends indeed to fountains and flowers, and the fragrant fruit of the olive, and the "dun nightingale insatiate of song"; and he speaks of a "day most fair to look upon after tempest," and of the ocean unruffled by a breeze and slumbering without a ripple, as well as when it whitens with the blast and roaring "falls in cadence." But surcharged with power and passion himself, he takes us where they are to be felt in nature, out amidst crags and peaks in thunder, hurricane, and earthquake, or to the sea where rages the fight between the Greeks and Persians, and the shores and the rocks are filled with the dead. And with nature's sublimities and the awful in life we have also beautiful little glimpses of the more quietly picturesque. He shows us the cascade from the mountain's brow—

"The ford, for hard it is to cross,
Attempt not until Caucasos thou gain,
Highest of mountains, from whose very brow
The river spouteth forth its might." (*Prometheus*);

and, with a touch which tells us that he must have observed it with interest, he points us to the vulture in solitary places soaring high and screaming over the disturbing intruder and bewailing the loss of her nestling brood—

"Like vultures which, through paths of air,
Scream, wheeling o'er their empty nest,
By oarage of strong pennons driven,
Missing the eyrie-watching care
Of callow fledgings." (*Agamemnon*.)

And then there is "the light in the lonely tower" where Clytaemnestra bewails in the night her long-absent, and, for anything she knew, perhaps her lost husband. And to give no other reference we may leave, as is appropriate, the fiery-hearted, flaming Aeschylus with the long line of beacon lights from Ida to the Arachnaean heights and the roof of the Atreidae.

"Hither through swift relays of courier-flame,
Beacon transmitted beacon. Ida first
To the Hermæan rock on Lemnos' Isle ;
Thence Athos' summit, dedicate to Zeus,
The third in order, caught the mighty glow.
Towering aloft, the pine-blaze, like the sun,
Gold-beaming, bridging in its might the sea,
Transmits the splendour of the advancing fire
To bold Macistos' watch-tow'rs," etc. (*Agamemnon*.)

When we pass from Aeschylus to Sophocles we descend, so far as rural scenery is concerned, from mountains with their crags and peaks to the low-lying vales with their calmly-flowing streams and their flowers. It is true that in *Antigone* he makes his chorus sing in anticipation of Euripides of a double-crested rock where roam the Corcyrian nymphs, and of the ivy-clad heights of the Nysian mountains, and that in the *Philoctetes* we have a picturesque description of the man so-called and of his mode of life in the desolate isle of Lemnos. But, characteristically, Sophocles loves the groves with the clear flowing streams and the flowers and the nightingales.

"This spot is holy, one may clearly tell,
Full as it is of laurel and the vine,
And sacred olive, and within its depths
Thick-haunting nightingales trill forth their songs."

"And there, beneath the gentle dews of heaven,
The fair narcissus with its clustered bells
Blooms ever, day by day,
Time-honoured wreath of mighty goddesses;
And the bright crocus with its leaf of gold.
And still unslumbering flow
Kephisus' wandering streams."¹

The scenes are sweet but tame and garden-like, and they contain in brief about all that Sophocles dwells on with pleasure of the landward beauties of the country. But he has frequently pleasant and appreciative references to the sea, and especially to the sea in storm—

"As when a wave, where Thracian blasts blow strong
On that tempestuous shore,
Up surges from the depth beneath the sea,
And from the deep abyss
Rolls the black wind-vexed sand,
And every jutting peak that drives it back
Re-echoes with the roar." (*Antigone.*)

But while there is comparatively little of rural scenery in Sophocles, and while that little is mostly of the lovely domestic kind, he shows perhaps, as an advance on his predecessors, a slightly deepening tone of tenderness and passion for flowers and nightingales and groves, and an increased tendency to speak of them for their own sake, and not for simile's sake alone or to set off man to advantage. And while he has advanced in his conception of the drama, and made it a

¹ *Oedipus Coloneus*, Plumptre's translation, from which other quotations in verse are taken.

thing of beauty as a whole, he has also drawn our attention more closely than his predecessors to the beauty of character ; and morally and theologically he has reached, by hints and implications, a higher platform than Aeschylus or Homer. In Homer morality among gods and men was comparatively a matter of will and power—as arbitrary as custom with ourselves, and often a very low custom at that ; and in Aeschylus the arbitrariness had given way to its opposite, an immanent power of righteousness in things which appeared among men in the moral necessity of Fate. But in Sophocles the objective rule of righteousness, which is also the will of the gods, becomes one with the subjective liking, the purer moral sense and feeling of mankind ; and so fate and freedom are reconciled in goodness—in the identification of the individual with the universal life, ours with God's. Antigone recognized in her feelings for her brother and her resolve to bury him the voice of the gods, and consequently the unity of her moral life with theirs and with the law of the universe.

“ Nor did I deem thy edicts strong enough,
Coming from mortal man, to set at nought
The unwritten laws of God that know not change.
They are not of to-day nor yesterday,
But live for ever, nor can man assign
When first they sprang to being. Not through fear
Of any man's resolve was I prepared
Before the gods to bear the penalty
Of sinning against these.”

And similarly in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* it is beautifully said, “ May destiny still find me winning the praise of reverent purity in all words and deeds sanctioned by those laws of range sublime, called into life throughout

the high clear heaven, whose father is Olympus alone ; their parent was no race of mortal men, no, nor shall oblivion ever lay them to sleep ; a mighty god is in them, and he grows not old.”¹

There was thus in Sophocles the conception of an eternal and inviolable rule of righteousness in the will of the gods, and it might be expressed in the deeper moral instincts of human nature with which it was in unison. There were the glimmerings of “the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” But man in various ways and from various causes might then as now misinterpret the will of the gods, and misread the rule. And in Euripides we have at least one pathetic picture which shows an advance in moral feeling over anything of the kind in either Aeschylus or Sophocles. In the *Choephoroi* Orestes is made to kill his mother Clytaemnestra in the most cold-blooded, matter-of-fact way. “Follow me,” he said to his mother, “I wish to slay thee close beside his corpse (Aegistha’s) here ; for when he was alive too, thou didst use to deem him better than my father. Go sleep with him in death, since thou dost love this man, and him whom thou wast bound to love thou loathest.” And he killed her with apparently as little feeling as he would a beast. The representation is the same in the *Electra* of Sophocles, but with this added touch of cold-blooded vengeance, that Electra shouts in encouragement to her brother, “Strike, if thou hast strength, a double stroke.” But while, in the *Electra* of Euripides, Orestes performs the murder as a duty and at the instigation of his sister and of the gods, as he thinks, he does the deed reluctantly, and *while covering his face with his robe*.

¹ Professor Jebb’s translation.

But if Euripides bears us a stage onwards in moral and religious culture, he also leads us a step in the development of the taste for natural beauty.× In frequency and length of reference to landscape, and in the love with which he apparently lingers on it and describes it, he is ahead of all his predecessors; and in the literature of Greece he may be called *par excellence* the dramatist poet of the picturesque.× He loved the light of heaven with a pure and fervent passion, and he never tired of its sweetness. It is constantly in his song; and so are the streams with their lucid flow, or whirling, eddying through the plains. Of all the objects of nature the light and the rivers are the most frequently and most lovingly mentioned by him. But like all the bards of his time, and of all times, he also loved the meadows, the fountains, and the flowers.

“O that his son he ne’er had laid
Where with their herds the herdsmen stray’d,
The fountains of the nymphs among,
Where rolls the lucid streams along,
And the green mead profusely pours
The blushing glow of roseate flowers,
With hyacinths of dusky hue,
For goddesses which lovely grew.”

(*Iphigenia in Aulis.*)

And like his great contemporaries, and Homer before him, he has of course to sing of the nightingale. But his song has in it a new note of passion, and it is more deliberately emphatic and prolonged.

“On thee, high-nested in the museful shade
By close-enwoven branches made,
Thee sweetest bird, most musical
Of all that warble their melodious song
The charmed woods among,
Thee tearful nightingale, I call :

O come, and from thy dark-plumed throat
 Swell sadly sweet thy melancholy note,
 Attempered to my voice of woe,
 For Helen let thy sorrows flow." (*Helena.*)

He watched too with interest the migratory, ordered flight of cranes across the blue, and listened to their leader's call ; and he thought them not unworthy of a strophe in his *Helena*. And he paints with minuteness tenderly the picture of the pigeons drinking wine, when one of them, partaking of what had been poisoned, was seized with convulsive shiverings, and stretched out her scarlet legs, and died (*Ion*). The hind also, with swelling neck wandering through the glades or woods, or joying in the lonely wilds (*Bacchae* and *Alcestis*), was for him a sight worth seeing and describing ; and the ships at sea were a joy to behold—

"The swift Phœnician bark, whose prow
 Gives birth to billows on the foaming tide,
 Joying the furrow'd waves to plough." (*Helena.*)

None of the poets of Greece, not even Aristophanes, describe the clouds in the sky, and few of even our modern poets dwell on them as objects worthy of their notice ; but we have hints in Euripides that they were a source of pleasure in a pure aesthetic way. Several times he speaks of them with apparent appreciation ; and he makes Alcestis, when drawn "by some one to the gates that close upon the dead," address them (the clouds) in farewell greeting with the sun, and the light of day, and the towered roofs, and the bridal bed—

"Thou sun, and thou fair light of day ! Ye clouds
 That in quick eddies whirl along the sky !"

and to a Greek there could be no surer proof than their place in such a list that they had been felt to be

one of the joys of life. And the nightly heavens, as well as the light of day, had their attractions for the poet, and frequently he dwells on them more fondly far than Homer.

“ The stars are sinking from the skies ;
 The rising Pleiads show the approach of day :
 High in mid heaven the eagle flies :
 Awake, arise : why this delay ?
 Awake, the watch forbids repose ;
 See, the pale moon a fainter lustre throws :
 The dawn is nigh, the dawn appears.
 See you yon star the heavens adorn ?
 ’Tis the bright harbinger of morn :
 New-risen, his gold-encircled head he rears.” (*Rhesus*.)

The strophe as thus translated has a nineteenth century tone and spirit. But the antistrophe is still more characteristic of Euripides, and it tells us how he used to listen for “the voices of the night” as well as watch for stars.

“ Where silver Simois winds along,
 I hear the sweet bird’s mournful song ;
 High-seated on some waving spray,
 To varying chords the warbling nightingale
 Attempts her melodious lay,
 And pours her sorrows through the vale.
 The flocks now feed on Ida’s height ;
 Loud shrills the pastoral pipe, and charms the night.”

And in the *Bacchæ*—

“ Through all the pastured grove,
 And all its leaves, a solemn silence reign’d
 Nor sound of beast was heard.”

The wonder is that the murmuring of streams by night is never mentioned. He is ever speaking of them as they are to be seen by day, but there is not a word of their sound by night.

But perhaps above all we should note what Euripides has to say about the more rugged and mountainous aspects of the world, as that is a point on which a love of nature is most frequently denied to the Greeks. No one, however, can read the *Bacchae* and the choruses of some of his other tragedies carefully, without feeling that our poet had been accustomed to look with a considerable degree of imaginative pleasure on glens and crags and wooded slopes, and on mountain heights with their varied atmospheric tints. A stroke of the pen and we have a nice little glimpse of a truly picturesque glen.

“ A hollow glen was here ;
On each side crags arose, and through the midst,
With pine trees shaded round a streamlet flowed.”

(*Bacchae.*)

And then follows a most graphic, though comic, description of the mode in which the unfortunate Pentheus was raised to the pine-tree top, and of the consequences to him when seen there by the Bacchae. The whole scene is most beautifully and vividly portrayed, and with the liveliest imaginative pleasure ; and, though the point of it for the audience no doubt lay more in the laugh than in the landscape, yet it has in it too the rugged slopes with crag and cliff, and these, it is to be noted, are the chosen haunts of Bacchus and his festive bands, which—unless we are to put cause for effect and effect for cause—would seem to imply a pleasure in such places previous to the placing of their mirthful god within them. But Bacchus loved the mountains also—

“ Where, Bacchus, dost thou now delight
To lead thy hallow'd band ?

On Nyssa's savage-nursing height
 Shakest thou thine ivy wand ?
 Dost thou, god, thine orgies keep
 On Corycus' craggy steep ;
 Or the darksome lairs among
 On high Olympus' forest-waving head,
 Where Orpheus tuned his sounding shell,
 And, as the harmonious measures swell,
 The trees, the savage beasts he led
 Attentive to the rapture-breathing song ?"

And that the Greeks were not without their joy in the varied hues of the hills in sunshine and shade may be seen from this last citation from Euripides :

"So to the Grecian arms a prey,
 The temple Ilium's height that crown'd
 The altar breathing odours round,
 O Jove, dost thou betray ?
 The flames of holy sacrifice,
 The clouds of incense wreathing to the skies.
 The towers of Pergamus, that rose
 A sacred rampire 'gainst the foes ;
 The darksome, ivy-vested woods,
 The woods that wave on Ida's brow,
 Down whose steep sides the cool translucent flood
 In mazy channels flow ;
 The height, which first the sun's bright ray
 Impurples with the orient light of day."

(*The Trojan Dames.*)

The clouds of incense, the towers, the woods, the streams, and *the coloured heights in the light of the rising sun*—all of them are beautiful, and all of them together form a lovely picture. Can anyone doubt that the poet felt a pleasure in such scenes apart from their utility ? That he had his reward in gazing at them simply as things of beauty ? Is it in our power, in the remembrance of what he says, to dream that he shrank with dread, or in hatred only, "from the rug-

gedness of lower nature—from the wrinkled forest bark, the jagged hill crest, and irregular, inorganic storm of sky,” and that for six thousand years, speaking in accordance with the old and worn-out conception of the world’s age, man was “utterly incapable of feeling any special happiness in the love of such things” as sea, and fountains and grass, or “any earnest emotion about them, considered as separate from man,” or saving as they could hurt or help him in some way?

But there is something still to advance in favour of the Greeks. Passing over Aristophanes, in whose *Clouds* and *Birds* we might find subjects for remark, we come to Theocritus and Moschus, who, besides introducing us anew to such scenes of Arcadian sweetness as we have already had occasion to refer to, give additional details of rural scenery, and new sources of pleasure altogether in their art. In birds of song they give us not only the nightingale, like Homer and the great tragedians, but also the lark, and the thrush, and the blackbird, and the goldfinch, and others; and, though we do not usually rank them amongst songsters, chancicleer of course as well befits pastoral poetry, and the sound of the cicada, and the murmuring of bees in summer. They speak as those who are familiar with all the sounds that are usually to be heard in the fields and groves; and there is one sylvan sound which they mark that we have not observed in Homer or the tragedians, and that is the whispering of the leaves in the breeze, or the music which is flung from the trees as they bend to the blast.

“Sweet is the music which the whispering pine
Makes to the murmuring fountain.”¹

¹ Theocritus, Idyll 1, Chapman’s translation.

“Two swains shall play the flute ; and Tityrus sing
 How love for Xenea did our Daphnis sting,
 How on the mountain he was wont to stray,
 How wailed for him the oaks of Himera.” (Idyll 7.)

And so Moschus in a beautiful little idyll ; and, as it reveals to us the likings of the poet for the sea as well as for inland scenery, and especially as the last lines give us another new and pleasing sound in Grecian verse, viz., the babbling of rills and fountains, we may quote it in full—

“When on the wave the breeze soft kisses flings,
 I rouse my fearful heart and long to be
 Floating at leisure on the tranquil sea ;
 But when the hoary ocean loudly rings,
 Arches his foamy back and spooming swings
 Wave upon wave, his angry swell I flee :
 Then welcome land and sylvan shade to me,
 Where, if a gale blows, still the pine tree sings.
 Hard is his life whose nets the ocean sweep,
 A bark his house, shy fish his slippery prey ;
 But sweet to me the unsuspecting sleep
 Beneath a leafy plane—the fountain’s play,
 That babbles idly, or whose tones, if deep,
 Delight the rural ear and not affray.” (5.)

The sweetness of the breath of kine and the fragrance of flowers, both of them also new features in the poetry of the Greeks, find expression in these poets. But there is an aspect of greater interest still, artistically and socially, in the poetry of Theocritus—a feature which brings him into comparison on a small scale with poets in modern times like Wordsworth, or with novelists like Dickens or Macdonald, and which allies his poetry in its contents to many of our modern paintings : he does not disdain to paint for us, lovingly and minutely, the lot and the life of the humblest poor, and he does it with a keen sense of

the picturesque and in the most graphic way. In the *Odyssey* we have pleasing and pathetic accounts of the faithful swineherd Eumaeus and of the old nurse Euryclea; but they were servants of Ulysses, some of his own more honoured dependents, and the story of them is told to reflect the greater glory on their master. And while Euripides represents the conduct of the poor man, to whom Electra was given in marriage, as entirely honourable and self-denying, he does it in a way which conveys the impression that the poor by themselves are not worth considering, and that their main business is to recognize their own unworthiness and make themselves useful by caring for the wealthy. But Theocritus paints the poor in their poverty with a sympathetic touch and as if they could be objects of interest to others by themselves and it would do us good to consider them. Here is his picture of Cydonian Lycides the goatherd—

“ Who not knew
That famous goatherd as he came in view :
A tawny, shaggy goatskin on his back,
That of the suppling pickle yet did smack ;
Bound by a belt of straw the traveller wore
An aged jerkin; in his hand he bore
A crook of the wild olive ; coming nigh,
With widely-parted lips and smiling eye—
The laughter on his lip was plain to see—
He quietly addressed himself to me,” etc. (Idyll 7.)

And then take his picture of the two fishermen as they lay in their wattled shed. What of its kind could be more picturesque or more sympathetic? It “reminds us of Crabbe,” says one of Theocritus’ admirers; “nothing can be more exquisite.”¹ And it is a forecast, we might add, of Victor Hugo’s “Poor Fisher Folk.”

¹ Howitt’s *Rural Life of England*, part iv, c. 1.

"Two fishers old in their wattled shed,
 Close to the wicker on one sea-moss bed ;
 Near them the tools wherewith they plied their craft,
 The basket, rush-trap, line, and reedy shaft,
 Weed-tangled baits, a drag-net with its drops,
 Hooks, cords, two oars, an old boat fixed on props.
 Their rush-mat, clothes, and caps, propt either head ;
 These were their implements by which they fed,
 And this was all their wealth. They were not richer
 By so much as a pipkin or a pitcher.
 All else seemed vanity: they could not mend
 Their poverty—which was their only friend.
 They had no neighbours; but upon the shore
 The sea soft murmured at their cottage door," etc.

(Idyll 21.)

These and other such picturesque descriptions in his poetry bring Theocritus into touch with our modern artists when they paint, for our pleasure, old houses and old castles and gipsy camps and the like; and they make us feel that our modern tastes are in kind not so modern after all, and that the ancient Greeks were pretty much like ourselves in intellectual and emotional sympathies.

/ But, while we have given enough to show that Ruskin's opinion as to "the novelty of landscape," and as to what it was in landscape that the Greeks could appreciate, must be very considerably modified by anyone who values historical truth or judicial impartiality, it must at the same time be evident to everyone who has an acquaintance with ancient and modern literature, that all that can be quoted from the Greek poets to show how they felt about the beauty of nature is comparatively, to modern poets, only as a stray snowdrop in early spring to the teeming, varied fulness of our summer fields and gardens. / A snowdrop may be lovely, as tenderly beautiful and delicate in its

colouring as any flower we can find, and so long as it exists in its freshness we admire it and speak in its praise. But in the literature of Greece we have to look for our flowers, while in modern literature they thrust themselves on our notice with such profusion sometimes as almost to hide the earth from our view.

Of course it might be said in apology for the Greeks, and said with much truth, that their greatest poets were mostly dramatists, and that it did not lie in their line, except in a very incidental way, to be describing natural scenery, or telling others how they felt about it. But so it might be said of Shelley in his *Prometheus Unbound*, and yet it has the spirit of all the beauties of earth and sea and sky in it, and more of a real passion for nature than all the poems and the prose of all the Greeks put together. And while it lay in Homer's line in the *Odyssey*, as much as it did in Longfellow's in *Evangeline*, to describe what was to be seen in the track of the wanderer, what a contrast when we pass from the former to the latter! In the one we are walking, as it were, among the barren moorlands where we are surprised but pleased to find a sheltered nook with a spring and a handful of flowers, and we halt in admiration, feeling that the spot is all the more lovely from its rarity; in the other, we faint with the sweetness of the scenes and their fragrance, and, weary with the glory of the vision, we long to escape to the breezy uplands or the lonely shore to buffet the storm for refreshment by contrast in the general desolation and fury. Opening at random and reading the paragraph the eye first alights on, we find in *Evangeline* an intensity of beauty, a passionate love of loveliness, and an ardour of description which render all attempts by

the Greeks at landscape painting absolutely tame and *fashionless*.

“And with those words of cheer they arose and continued their journey.

Softly the evening came. The sun from the western horizon
Like a magician extended his golden wand o’er the landscape ;
Twinkling vapours arose ; and sky and water and forest
Seemed all on fire at the touch, and melted and mingled together.
Hanging between two skies, a cloud with edges of silver,
Floated the boat, with its dripping oars, on the motionless water.
Filled was Evangeline’s heart with inexpressible sweetness.
Touched by the magic spell, the sacred fountains of feeling
Glowed with the light of love, as the skies and the waters around
her.

Then from a neighbouring thicket the mocking-bird—wildest of
singers—

Swinging aloft on a willow-spray that hung o’er the water,
Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music,
That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to
listen.

Plaintive at first were the notes and sad ; then soaring to madness
Seemed they to follow or guide the revels of frenzied Bacchantes.
Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamentation ;
Till, having gathered them all, he flung them abroad in derision,
As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the tree-tops
Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower on the branches.
With such a prelude as this, and hearts that throbbed with emotion,
Slowly they entered the Têche, where it flows through the green
Opelousas,

And through the amber air, above the crest of the woodland,
Saw the column of smoke that arose from a neighbouring dwelling ;
Sounds of a horn they heard and the distant lowing of cattle.”

And so endlessly from every page of the story we might quote. But the passage cited is appropriate as it happens for comparison with the ancient poets from its description of the singing of the mocking-bird. They frequently speak in praise of the nightingale, and thrush and blackbird and lark are mentioned.

But what is in them to compare for a moment with the passionate earnestness of the quotation just made from Longfellow, or with the enchanted enthusiasm, the mad whirl of excitement, in the addresses of some of our other poets to the sky-lark ? Wordsworth and Shelley and Hogg—but, why, the difference is as great as in passing suddenly from the first streak of dawn to mid-day summer sunshine, or from the chilliness of our northern spring to the heat of a tropical summer ; and it needs no further comment. We pass to the Roman poets.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE, IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE ROMANS.

IN passing from the Greeks to a consideration of the place of the Roman poets in the development of taste there are some things, we think, which we may take for granted. It will save time and labour, and, as we deem it, superfluous reference and quotation.

First of all, we may assume that, like men from even prehistoric times we may say, the Romans generally, and the poets in particular, had a joy in the light of morning, in the singing of birds and in brooks and flowers, in groves and meadows and in rich pasture lands, in the whispering of leaves and the perfume of flowers, and in fragrance generally. No one who knows anything about the poets, or about human nature even, can have any doubt about that. And, in the second place, we may assume that their joy in these things had an æsthetic element in it: that they loved them as we do for their loveliness as well as for the more sensuous pleasures they afforded in the comforts of the body present or prospective, for their beauty as well as for their use. And though paragraphs are to be met with in literature which would seem to imply a doubt of it, there can really be no more reasonable question of that than of our former assumption.

Flowers were fair and fragrant to the Romans as they are to us, and they speak of them as such; and when children went out to gather them, and up-grown people decked themselves, or their cattle, or their tombs with wreaths, they did so (and it is hard to conceive any other reason for it) because they thought them beautiful, and delighted in ornament for themselves and their gods. And it was the same with the other aspects of nature to which we have referred. Soothing to the nerves they might be and a luxury to the fancy, but at the same time they were fair and lovely as the flowers. "And now each field, now every tree buds forth, now the woods break into leaf, now fairest is the year"¹ And how the poets loved the country every reader of Lucretius, or Virgil, or Horace, or Ovid knows; or, if it has slipped his memory, he may easily renew his knowledge by a reference to *De Rerum Natura*, ii. 20-36, the second *Georgic*, 458 *et seq.*, the second *Epode*, and the *Metamorphoses*, we might almost say *ad aperturam*.

It is perhaps not going beyond the assumptions thus made to say that the Romans were lovers of landscape in the sense of far-outreaching glimpses of field and forest and shore, and that they delighted in sites for houses from which they could obtain such prospects of the picturesque. But perhaps it will be necessary to lead proof of that; and the task, we think, will not be a hard one.

"And you, ye dancing waters of the lake,
Rejoice; and every smile of home awake!"

¹ Virgil, *Ecllogue* iii., Lonsdale and Lee's translation, from which all quotations from Virgil are made.

Dear Sirmio, that art the very eye
 Of islands and peninsulas that lie
 Deeply embosomed in calm inland lake,
 Or where the waves of the vast ocean break;
 Joy of all joys to gaze on thee once more!"

So sang Catullus to Sirmio. And "on the beautiful peninsula of Sirmio," says Theodore Martin, "was situated the poet's patrimonial country-house. This promontory, which projects into the Lacus Benacus, now the Lago di Garda, was about two miles in circumference. 'Sirmione,' says Eustace (*Classical Tour*, V. i., c. v. 8vo edit.), 'appears as an island, so low and so narrow is the bank that unites it to the mainland. The promontory spreads behind the town and rises into a hill entirely covered with olives. In the centre of a magnificent lake, surrounded with scenery of the greatest variety and majesty, secluded from the world, and yet beholding from his garden the villas of his Veronese friends, he might enjoy equally the pleasures of retirement and society. More convenience and more beauty are seldom united. The soil is fertile; the surface is varied, sometimes shelving in gentle declivities, at other times breaking into craggy magnificence, and thus furnishing every requisite for delightful walks and luxurious baths; while the views vary at every turn, presenting rich coasts or barren mountains, sometimes confined to the cultivated scenes of the neighbouring shore, and at other times bewildered and lost in the windings of the lake or the recesses of the Alps.'"¹ The description, as it seems to us, is at once apt and interesting, and it may help us perhaps to give a new intensity to the words of Cicero when he

¹ *The Poems of Catullus*, pp. 213-214.

exclaims, "Quanta maris est pulchritudo! quae species universi! quae multitudo et varietas insularum! quae amoenitates orarum et littorum!"¹ And it is a confirmation of the saying of Horace that "a house is praised which surveys a length of fields."² And the same thing is implied when, addressing Maecenas, he bids him—

"Leave Tibur sparkling with its thousand rills;
Forget the sunny slopes of Aesulae,
And ragged peaks of Telagonian hills
That frown defiance on the Tuscan sea.
Forego vain pomps, nor gaze around
From the tall turret of the palace home
On crowded masts, and summits temple-crowned,
The smoke, the tumult, and the wealth of Rome."³

Can anything more be wanted in proof of our position that the Romans were lovers of landscape in the sense of far outlying stretches of field and stream and sea, and that it is not such a "novelty" as it has been thought to be? But there is more than even that in the quotations we have given. There is the mention of *hills* as well as fields and sea and shore, and there is evidence enough for believing, in spite of all assertions to the contrary, that they loved the roughnesses of rocks, and jagged peaks, and mountain heights, and hollow caves. Lucretius writes as if it had been quite a customary thing for him to wander with companions among the mountains listening for the echoes redoubled by the rocks.

"Whence may'st thou solve, ingenuous! to the world
The rise of echoes, formed in desert scenes,

¹ *De Natura Deorum*, lib. ii. 39.

² *Epistles*, b. i. 10.

³ *Od.*, b. iii. 29. *The Spectator*, Aug. 15. 1885.

Mid rocks and mountains, mocking every sound,
 When late we wander through their solemn glooms,
 And with loud voice some lost companion call,
 And oft re-echoes echo till the peal
 Ring seven times round : so rock to rock repels
 The mimic shout, reiterated close."¹

And the way in which he speaks of clouds, in a passage which we shall cite in its proper place, would seem to imply that he gazed on them in admiration because of their resemblance to mountains and rocks with their caves in the sky. And Cicero directly and emphatically declares "nos campis, nos montibus fruimur."² And, when speaking of the beauty of the things which have been formed by divine providence, he says, "Adde huc fontium gelidas perennitates, liquoresque perlucidos amnium, riparum vestitus viridissimos, speluncarum concavas altitudines, saxorum asperitates, impendentium montium altitudines, immensitatesque camporum."³ The ruggednesses of rocks, and the heights of overhanging mountains are some of the things for which, it is usually thought, the ancients had no taste ; and yet there they are gravely appealed to as things of beauty which attest the taste and agency of God. And we "enjoy them—we delight in them," says Cicero. And they enjoyed too⁴ moss-covered rocks,⁴ and mossy springs, and mossy banks of rivers, and mossy bark perhaps ;⁵ and these too are some of the things for which, it might be thought, the Romans had but little care.

And, if we pass from the more rugged features of earth to the nightly heavens, we shall find that the

¹ B. iv. 574-581, Good's translation, from which all quotations from the same poet are made, but the references are to the Latin.

² *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 60.

³ *Idem*, ii. 39.

⁴ Lucretius, b. v. 946-949 ; Horace, *Epistles*, b. i. 10.

⁵ Virgil, *Eclogue* vii. 45 ; *Georgic* iii. 144 ; *Eclogue* vi. 62-63.

Romans, like all cultured nations before and since, had a love for the stars. "Quo spectaculo," says Cicero, "nihil potest admirabilius esse, nihil pulchrius." And Lucretius, in a passage which is well worth quoting at once for its merit and for purposes of comparison, sings—

"The vault of heaven cerulean, spangled thick
 With stars, and with the effulsive lustre cheered
 Of sun and moon refulgent—were at once
 This scene celestial o'er the race of man
 To burst abrupt, how would the nations start!
 What wonders then be traced! with what vast toil
 Would e'en the sage the prospect preconceive!
 Yet now, full sated with the scene sublime,
 Man scarce lifts up his listless eyes to heaven."¹

The likeness of the passage to one in Cicero² and to another in Emerson indicates more than a dependence of suggestion somehow between them. "If the stars should appear," writes the Concord sage, "one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these preachers of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile."³

And as to the clouds that veil the sky, no one seems to have watched them with more of interest than Lucretius; and he has written of them at greater length, and, excepting Shelley, with more enthusiasm perhaps than any other poet ancient or modern. He has whole pages in succession about them; and he has written not merely as a scientist or philosopher seeking to account for them in their various phases, but as a poet who felt their beauty and could gaze on

¹ B. ii. 1029-1038.

² *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 38.

³ *Nature*, c. i.

them with rapture. He loved to mark their rise from earth—

“ Whence, from the pores terrene, with foremost haste
Rushed the bright ether, towering high, and swift
Streams of pure fire attracting as it flowed.
Not differing wide from what full oft we view
When, at the dawn, the golden-tressed sun
Flames o’er the meadows rich with rosy gems,
And from the mountains, lakes, and teeming glebes,
Draws many a vapour, which, when once aloft
By the chill air condensed, to clouds concretes,
And with its filmy drapery veils the heavens.”¹

And when they stood out in mountain heights and in snowy folds against the blue of the sky, how he revelled in the grandeur and the glory of them! His science might be at fault, but not his poetic eye.

“ For mark what clouds of mountain-bulk the winds
Drive thwart the welkin when the tempests rave ;
Or climb the giddy cliff, and, e’en in calms,
View what vast loads, accumulated deep,
Roll, tire o’er tire, through ether ; and thou, then,
Must own their magnitudes, and well may’st deem
What caves stupendous through such hanging rocks
Spread ; what wild winds possess them, through the storm
Roaring amid their bondage, as, at night,
Roar through their dens the savage beasts of prey.”²

And then on page after page he depicts, and explains as best he can, the storm-cloud with its blackness of tempest and its lightning gleams, and in all its varied accompaniments. And the roar of thunder and the showers are not awanting.

“ Then springs, and raves, and ripens, till, at length,
Grown full mature the shackling cloud it cleaves,

¹ B. v. 458-467.

² B. vi. 189-198.

And down abrupt, with vibratory flash
 Diffused o'er all things, flings the missile fate.
 Roars next the deep-toned clangour, as though heaven
 Through all its walls were shattered ; earth below
 Shakes with the mighty shock, from cloud to cloud
 Redoubling still through all th' infuriate vault :
 While, loosened by the conflict, prone descends
 The accumulated torrent, broad and deep,
 As though all ether into floods were turned,
 And a new deluge menaced man and beast."¹

After reading Lucretius one is curious to know whether Ruskin had thought of him when he lectured on the storm-cloud, or whether it was an oversight on his part. But, after asking, "What has been said of this storm-cloud?" he answered, in apparently direct opposition to what he had said before,² "Nothing. It is a modern invention ; it is not yet out of its teens ! there is no description of it by ancient observers ; they did not and could not see it, for in their time it was not in sight. Homer and Virgil, Aristophanes and Horace, Chaucer and Dante, Milton and Thomson, Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron, and even that most observant and descriptive of scientific men, De Saussure, are all silent concerning it. And yet they looked at the heavens and watched the sunrise and sunset, and have left behind them evidence respecting the cloud phenomena of their times."³ But, to say nothing of the moderns, the author of the *Book of Job* had seen it, and Pacuvius had seen it,⁴ and Lucretius had seen it and written of it with enthusiasm, and Virgil had seen it, and so had the author of the *Toy-Cart*, and he speaks of it beautifully.

¹ B. vi. 282-292.

² *Modern Painters*, vol. iii., part iv., c. xv., § 21.

³ "The Storm-Cloud," as reported in *The Art Journal*, April, 1884.

⁴ Sellar's *Roman Poets of the Republic*, p. 148, first edition.

Yon mighty cloud, advancing with the wind,
 With store of arrowy shower, with thundering drums,
 And blazing streamers, marches to assail
 In his own heavens the monarch of the night.

There like a string of elephants, the clouds
 In regular file, by lightning fillets bound,
 Move slowly at their potent god's commands.
 The heavens let down a silver chain to earth.
 The earth that shines with buds and sheds sweet odours
 Is pierced with showers, like diamond-shafted darts
 Launched from the rolling mass of deepest blue,
 Which heaves before the breeze and foams with flame;
 Like ocean's dark waves by the tempest driven,
 And tossing high their flashing surge to shore."¹

After writing at such length on the taste of the Romans generally for natural beauty, and quoting so freely in proof of it, we might afford to forego any further consideration of them. But we have still to assign to two of them in particular, Lucretius and Virgil, a more definite place in the development of taste than we have yet been able to give them.

De Rerum Natura, it has been said, "is the one classical poem which shows a greater direct interest in outward nature than in human feeling or action"; and it "consists in an intense sympathy for the grand, and especially the limitless, in power, in space, and in time. He touches with equal readiness and impressiveness the sublime of degree, of expanse, and of duration. No classical poet has done so with greater frequency and variety." "The motion of the limitless is everywhere present as the speculative element, the grounding idea of his theory of the universe. But the infinity of time is comparatively subordinate to the immensity of space, for the latter

¹ *The Theatre of the Hindus*, vol. i. p. 97-98.

is needed as the condition—the room, in fact, for power and time to work out their results.”¹ But while he deals throughout with an infinity of atoms falling into order and working out the appearances of nature and the problems of history through an immensity of space in an infinity of time, Lucretius somehow does not stir within us the emotion of the sublime like the Hebrew bards and prophets. We read his poem for the most part as we read a scientific treatise, or a handbook of astronomy, with interest and pleasure indeed, but, unless when he is dealing with the infinitely small, with hardly the faintest emotion akin to the sentiment of sublimity. Perhaps the expressed purpose of the poem, its polemical tone and spirit, and its frequent ingenious absurdities have something to do with the fact; but so it is, and there is little to indicate that Lucretius himself was feeling that he was moving amid sublimities in the writing of his poem. Once indeed he speaks directly of the emotion; and the passage is noteworthy from its being the only one that we remember in the Greek or Roman poets in which the emotion is directly and unmistakably expressed.

“His ibi me rebus quaedam divina voluptas
Percipit atque horror; quod sic natura tua vi
Tam manifesta patens ex omni parte relecta est.”²

The certain divine pleasure and the awe (horror) very happily express what we nowadays conventionally call the emotion of sublimity; and the poet's nature would seem to have been sometimes too strong for the speculative materialist and Epicurean. In our

¹ *Lucretius and the Atomic Theory*, by Professor Veitch.

² B. iii. 23-30.

realization of the sublime our materialism has for the moment been left behind us and the gods are near, not afar in the inter-spaces of the world "careless of mankind."

But while Lucretius, with manifest sincerity of conviction, traces for us as best he can the rise of worlds from atoms and the void, and speaks of their decay, and while he leads out our thoughts to the likelihood of an infinity of worlds throughout the wide immensity of space, there is no passage in all his poem, in the reading of which our minds are so baffled and confounded in their attempts to grasp the subtlety of things, like the first half of the fourth book in which he seeks to account for vision by the images which fly perpetually from every object and are redoubled like echoes, and re-redoubled, by every shining surface. The passage is one of the most powerful, as it is one of the most natural and unconstrained in his poem; and there, if anywhere in our reading of it, are we made to feel the rising emotion of sublimity. And, what concerns us more in our present quest, we are made to feel the keen delight, the undisguised and child-like pleasure, with which the poet watched the reflection of objects from every polished surface, and the minuteness, the microscopicalness, of his observation of the varied beauties and objects of the world around him. For the keenness of his observation of things minute and his pleasure in recalling them, he may indeed be called the William Black of ancient times. Black will paint for us the turn of a feather, and the reflection of the foot of a gull, or the ripple made by a dying wasp in water; and his minute and detailed descriptions have been taken as an indication of a develop-

ment in visual power since even Wordsworth's times.¹ But while his references to the minutest aspects of natural scenery may be much more frequent than those of Lucretius, as his works are much more numerous, they are also more laboured and more consciously done for effect; and, while they are no more accurate nor interesting, they can hardly show any keener joy in nature. Lucretius stands enchanted, awed perhaps, by the mystery of reflections, the beauty and the subtlety of the ever-fleeting images of things; and he tells us of them lovingly, enthusiastically, and without self-complacency in the tale. After a shower the muddy pools in the street reflect the sky, and he has to stand and gaze in wonder at the heavens beneath him.

"So in the puny pools inch-high that fill,
When showers descend, the hollows in our streets,
A prospect opens, earth as deep below
As bends o'er earth th' ethereal vault sublime:
Where may'st thou trace the fleeting clouds, the heavens,
And heavenly orbs in wondrous guise displayed."²

Or filling a bowl with water and putting it under the open sky by night, he watches the sparkling of the stars therein and calls us to observe it.

"To proofs thus cogent of the rapid race
Of insubstantial semblances, adjoin
This fact decisive; that when once at night,
Beneath the spangled concave gleams the vase
Filled from the bubbling brook, the curious eye
Marks in the lymph, responsive, every star
That strews with silver all the radiant pole."³

And, making experiments for himself, he marked with curious eye how the different objects in the house

¹ Hamerton's *Landscape*.

² B. iv. 415-420.

³ *Idem*, 210-214.

could be transferred by reflection from one mirror to another, and how with each reflection the object would apparently assume a new position, the right side seeming on our left in the mirror, and the left on the right, and so on (b. iv. 270-311). He has to tell us also about the motes which float in the sun-beam as it strikes through some chink of wall or shutter into a darkened room (b. ii. 113-119); and the lightness of gossamer and thistledown and feather's fall do not escape him (b. ii. 382-388); nor does the fact that different layers of clouds may be seen moving across each other in opposite directions (b. v. 645-646), nor the shells that lie in varied beauty on the shore (b. ii. 374-376).

We have already noticed how much he seems to have watched the clouds, and how he roamed among the hills listening to the echoes of his companions' voices, and we learn (b. v. 1366-1377) how in common with others he loved to gaze on far-outreaching prospects of the picturesque; and these, with his speculations on atoms and the rise of worlds, and his closeness of observation of details, bring Lucretius into immediate relation with the sympathies and tendencies of our times. And there is another point of contact between him and the present in his evidently deep sympathy with the whole of the animal creation, with the beasts of the field as well as with the joys and sorrows of men. He would readily, we imagine, have joined a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and he certainly was earnest in his endeavours to lessen "man's inhumanity to man." He had to stay in the exposition of his atoms to tell the world how the cow, deprived of her calf in sacrifice, would wander restlessly in search

of it, and how the kid and the lamb with tremulous voice would search in anxiety for their dams (b. ii. 352-370). And his sympathy with suffering humanity is strongly expressed in his picture of Iphigenia about to be offered in sacrifice by the hand of her father. His whole nature was stirred by the thought of it into agony and loathing of the transaction and of the superstition that could prompt it; and, in horror and bitterness of soul, he indignantly and vehemently exclaimed in the ever memorable, because truthful, line,

“Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum !”

But he is as much in sympathy with the joy of creation as with its sufferings and sorrows. And to his eye the world in spring especially presents an animated and happy spectacle. Not only is there a bounding cheerfulness in bird and beast, but the very ocean and sky, and the leaves and the air, partake of the gladness and smile and put forth their powers in joy.¹ And if he thought that he could have improved on the make of the world in many respects (b. v. 201-240), and that the gods did not interfere with the ongoing of things, he yet seemed to feel that there was a “pre-established harmony” to joy in spring that one might call divine and innocently ascribe in personification to “Alma Venus.”

But there was more than a pre-established harmony to joy in spring with Lucretius. If Aeschylus and Sophocles recognized an established order of things in the moral world, Lucretius recognized a like order in the physical world; and he leads us towards the idea of an essential unity between the

¹ B. i. 6-21; ii. 317-320; 990-997; v. 781-785.

worlds physical and moral. For, notwithstanding his “fortuitous concourse” of atoms to begin with, he had a firm belief in the necessity of law and order and a clear perception of nature as a system. If there were no law or order in production, everything, he says, might spring from everything (b. i. 160-174), and there would be only chaos and confusion—no world at all in fact. But everywhere there is a predictable order of occurrences; and not only does like produce its like in the vegetable and animal worlds, but there is a time and a season for everything under the sun, for the rising and the setting of the sun himself, and the shortening and the lengthening of the nights and days, for the coming and the going of different kinds of flowers and fruits, and so on in endless variety of order (b. i. 175 *et seq.*; v. 665 *et seq.*). And while of course there could be nothing new in the facts thus adduced, the same things having been observed and counted upon in practice throughout all preceding generations, there *was* something new and much-needed in the application of them to the exclusion of caprice from the system of nature and the suppression of superstition and superstitious fear. Men, to be sure, could see that the sun had his times of rising and setting, and the flowers their seasons, and that plants produced seed after their kind, and so on; but they were not above believing in the arbitrary appearances of gods and goddesses for vicious purposes, nor in the capricious metamorphoses of men and women into beasts, or trees, or stones. And if, when wandering leisurely through glade or glen, a man might innocently come in sight of naked goddesses with the result of being changed

into a stag and hunted and devoured by his dogs; or, when pulling at a tree, should be appealed to by it for mercy, or have his path hedged round in other ways by fear of portents and omens inauspicious, he would not be likely to walk for pleasure where the danger or the horror lay. Fauns and satyrs, dryads and hamadryads, and orcs, and nymphs of all descriptions, and gods and goddesses, and other superstitions of the times stood constantly and directly in the way of the populace making the woods and mountains their resorts or enjoying to the full in any way the beauties of the world around them. It was not that they could not see a grandeur in the hills: they did; but horrors haunted them in the shape of god and beast. And the polemics of Lucretius against the superstitions of his times had as great a value for aesthetics as for the cause of true religion and morality. He was helping, by his disenchantments, to make field and forest and hill a heritage of beauty for the people, to open for them paths in woods and in mountains in which they might wander without fear. And that was the one thing needful in his time, as it is still with many in our own time, for the development of a taste for landscape and of a love for lonely shores—not the purging of the outward eye, but freedom by the truth in relation to nature and natural law and order. There were beasts of prey in his day, and these stood in the way of the people's enjoyment of natural scenery; but they were not so much of an obstruction to it as the fears which sprang from ignorance and superstition.

“ For savage monsters crowd the world e'en now,
Fearful and gaunt; and hills and groves remote

And pathless woods re-echo to their roar ;
Scenes still, our feet with ease may ever shun,
But with the mind unpurged, what tumult dire,
What dangers inly rage ! " (b. v. 40-45).

But there is an omission in Lucretius which we have to note as significant. While he has frequent appreciative references to the beauty and the fragrance of flowers, he never lets us know what flowers in particular he is speaking of. He deals with them in the abstract, not in the concrete. He does not see violets, nor hyacinths, nor marigolds, nor foxgloves, nor lilies, nor roses, but only flowers in general. And it is the same with singing birds, and, for the most part, the same with trees. He was charmed with the music of the groves ; but he speaks of hawks and gulls and cranes and swans and geese, and not of nightingales, or larks, or thrushes, or their companions in song. And while he mentions the olive and speaks of vineyards and apples, and delights in the beauty of foliage, he does not, like Homer, or Virgil, or Ovid, generally individualize and speak of elm, or yew, or alder, or oak, or pine, or palm. Considering how keen was his observation the omission is all the more remarkable. And how is it to be explained ? Was it that he did not know the names of the different flowers and birds and trees ? Perhaps it was not. But, putting the two facts together, the omission and the otherwise keen observation, they would seem to indicate that Lucretius was more of a philosopher than a naturalist or artist, and that his main interest, as he tells us, was in speculation for a practical end in freedom from superstitious fear in its every form.

After Lucretius there is nothing in Roman poetry

to indicate any advance in taste for natural beauty. Catullus was fond of travelling, and he loved the sea with something of a modern yachtsman's ardour; but there is nothing in his descriptions of scenery that calls for special remark. Nor is there in Virgil. He loved the shade of trees by murmuring summer brook, and he listened for the music of the pines and watched the skimming of the swallow and the long line of rooks in their homeward flight. "He makes us hear again, with a strange delight, the murmur of bees feeding on the willow hedge, the moan of turtle-doves from the high elm tree, the sound of the whispering south wind, of waves breaking on the shore, of rivers flowing down through rock and valleys, the song of the woodman plying his work, the voice of the divine poet chanting his strain. By a few simple words he calls up before our minds the general luxuriance of spring, the freshness of early morning, the rest of all living things in the burning heat of noon, the stillness of evening, the gentle imperceptible motions of nature in the shooting up of the young alder tree and in the gradual colouring of the grapes on the sunny hill-sides."¹ Love for the wilder aspects of nature is not characteristic of him; but he gives us many little glimpses of the distinctively picturesque in the rugged scenery of the shore, and "the power of the hills," it has been thought, was on him when he spoke of Father Appenninus raising himself to the sky, and resounding with his holm-oaks, and rejoicing in his snowy top (*Aeneid* xii. 701-703). But, whatever may have been his liking for rugged and mountain scenery (and there is enough in his poetry, we think, to show

¹ Sellar's *Roman Poets of the Augustan Age*, c. iv. 3.

that he had such a liking), no one could draw a picture of a man in action or of a crowd in excitement more vividly than he—not even Homer with all his descriptive power. And, from the number of such pictures that he gives us, he was evidently fond of the occupation.

But after all that may be said of Virgil's love of nature, there is nothing in his poetry in that relation which marks him off distinctly from his predecessors or contemporaries; and we may say of him, as we have said of Homer, that, lover of peace and gentle and compassionate though he was, he dwells apparently with more gusto on the horrors of battle than on landscape, and portrays more minutely the monster Polyphemus than the beauties of the shore.✕ And, whatever may have been his own joy in nature, no one perhaps has ever stood more in the way of the world's advancement to the free enjoyment of its beauty. It may seem a strange accusation to make, but we believe it is true that he was one of the main influences in retarding for centuries the development of a liking for forest and hill and shore. And this is why we think so. From the first he was one of the most popular of poets. He was revered in his own day by the people, and lectured on, it would seem, by grammarians; and in the first century not only were his books used in the school-room, but his birth-day was kept as a holiday, and he was even ranked among the gods. And, through the centuries following, his poems were opened at random, as the Bible might still be by superstitious people, for divine directions; and he was looked upon as philosopher and prophet and magician. He was specially honoured by the early Christian fathers, and Christian

people praised him with St. Paul. His form was sculptured in cathedrals among Old Testament saints, and his verses have been found in the catacombs with the cross and monogram of our Lord. And what could show his power in the Middle Ages more than the fact that Dante represents him as his teacher and his guide through hell? But just in proportion as he was revered as a saint and honoured as a sage would be his influence in perpetuating and spreading such ideas and beliefs as, we have already seen, stood directly in the way of the people's free enjoyment of natural scenery, and which it was Lucretius' great endeavour to destroy. For, believe who will that Virgil regarded "Nature as a coherent body of universal law," no one at an advanced stage of civilization was ever more wholly and sincerely superstitious, or had actually less of a consistent belief in the uniformity of nature's order. He believed apparently in laws and eternal covenants laid down by nature for the growth of certain plants and trees in certain soils; and yet to him the sun had forebodings of swelling treachery and hidden wars, and the sea, as well as dogs and birds, and the entrails of beasts, would give signs of coming ills, and Aetna, belching forth her flames, might tell of approaching doom. "Germany heard a clashing of arms in the whole heavens: with unwonted heavings quaked the Alps. Oft too a voice was distinctly heard through the silent groves, a voice of mighty tones, and phantoms ghastly in marvellous mode appeared in the dusk of twilight: and cattle spoke (a monstrous portent), rivers stay their course, the earth opens its mouth, ivory weeps as in sorrow within the shrines, statues of bronze sweat. Eridanus, monarch of waters, whirl

ing forests in his mad eddy, poured forth his flood, and over all the plains bore herds and stalls alike. Nor at the same time did fibres of threatening import ever cease to appear in the entrails that boded ill, or jets of blood to flow from wells, and high cities to resound the night long with the howling of wolves. At no other time did more lightnings shoot through a cloudless sky; nor ever so oft did ill-boding comets blaze. Therefore it came to pass that a second time Philippi saw Roman lines engage in civil fight; and the heavenly powers thought it would not be unmeet that twice with Roman blood Emathia and the broad plain of Haemus should be fattened" (*Georgic* i. 474-492).

And not only might nature be thus arbitrarily and horribly prophetic, but trees when pulled at might bleed and groan and prophesy; and harpies, half maiden, half bird, might in their loathsomeness descend to their feast on the shore; and monsters like the cyclops, or the half-brutish Cacus, might haunt the caves and the mountains; and bees might be produced *de novo* by a process of fermentation from a bullock of a certain age killed in a certain way; and men might spring from trees (*Aeneid* viii. 315); and ships might be changed into nymphs (*id.* x. 220-224); and fauns and gods and goddesses of course might haunt the woods, to the exclusion, in ordinary circumstances, of those who knew it, and to the danger of those who did not. "Even then the awful sanctity of the spot used to scare the frightened rustics, even then they shuddered at the grove and cliff. 'This wood,' he says, 'this hill with leafy crown, is haunted by a god: what god it is is doubtful; the Arcadians believe they have beheld Jove himself, while many a time his right hand shook the

darkling aegis and stirred the thunderclouds" (*Aeneid* viii. 349-354).

"Jam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestes
Dira loci ; jam tum silvam saxumque tremebant."

Just so. And how, when in mortal fear of the gods, could the rustics be supposed to go for pleasure where they might at any time meet them? And how could Virgil's poems, read and revered as they were for centuries, have other than a retarding influence on the love of men for wood and hill and shore, when they spoke of these as haunted by man-eating monsters, or by supernatural beings still more to be feared by men? Homer, so far as known, would have a similar influence, and so would all classical poets in which such tales are told, and so all nursery rhymes and stories of giants and vampires and demons and witches and ghosts and so forth. And it is only now, when we have got rid of belief in such things and of robbers and beasts of prey, and have attained to a feeling of security anywhere, that people in general are left free to rejoice in the hills and the lonely shore, and in the exploration of caves and mountain wilds and wilderness and solitudes unknown. It is not because we have better eyes than men in olden times, or can see what they could not see, that we are drawn to jagged peaks and wilds from which they shrank, but because we have "walked forth into the light of things" and have entered into a heritage of freedom, of which Lucretius, with all his love of intellectual liberty, could not even have dreamed.

But if in some things Virgil is farther away from us than Lucretius, in others he is much nearer us—very near and very modern in sentiment and sympathy. Virgil's is peculiarly the poetry of pathos. Like

Longfellow he broods pathetically on the days gone by, and listens in tears for the voices of the past. "We have been Trojans; Ilium was" (*Aeneid* ii. 325). Such was the mournful message of Pantheus to Aeneas when Troy was in flames; and a sigh for vanished glory runs through all the *Aeneid*. "An ancient city is falling." "With tears I leave my native shores and the harbour and the plains where Troy was. I am borne an exile into the deep with my comrades and son and penates and great gods" (*Aeneid* iii. 10-12). The days of old—old trees, old men, old shores, old lands, old customs, old arms—and all things with old associations are dwelt on with frequency and pathos. The cypress and the bay-tree were entwined in olden times, like the rowan tree with ourselves, "wi' mony ties o' hame and infancy" (*Aeneid* ii. 714-715; vii. 59-60). And "the old arm-chair" and old homes are not without their prototypes. "With this golden bowl Anchises used to pour libations at the altars; these did Priam wear when he summoned his people in due form to give them laws, even this sceptre and holy tiara and these robes, the workmanship of the daughters of Ilium" (*id.* vii. 245-248). And with such remembrances of the past there is of course combined thorough sympathy, great tenderness for the weak and helpless and forlorn—for all in misfortune. When Aeneas saw Priam, once the proud ruler of Asia with so many peoples and lands, lying on the shore "a huge trunk, and a head torn from the shoulders, and a body without a name," the image of his father, the king's equal in age, came to view, and Creusa forsaken, and his house destroyed, and what might have happened to his little Iulus (ii. 554-563). And more pathetic still is the plea of the youth Euryalus as he ventured

forth into the night with Nisus on a dangerous message, and, as it happened, to death. One boon above all he craved, that, in case of accident to himself, they would comfort and relieve his helpless mother. With such a promise he could face more boldly every risk, and having got the promise from Iulus that his mother would be his (Iulus') in all but the name, he sallied forth with Nisus to glory and to death. And the false and perjured Sinon too could speak pathetically of his having no hope of seeing again his old fatherland, or sweet children, or parent whom he longed to see, and Sinon himself was saved by the Trojans in pity for his misfortunes. And so was Achemenides, the wan and rugged fugitive from Polyphemus; and his case shows all the more strongly the poet's sense of the claims of misfortune on the sympathies of men, for, after Sinon, the Trojan wanderers might have suspected treachery, or put Achemenides to death, out of sheer revenge on the Greeks. But the whole of the *Aeneid* may be said to be a plea for the unfortunate Trojans, and a representation of the idea that the vanquished, by their very discomforture and misfortunes, may pass to final victory and greater glory. It is "the epic of failure—of failure that is pregnant with triumph, of the victory of the vanquished." Of Aeneas, as of Abraham, it was said in prophecy, "Go forth into a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation," and through sorrow and through gloom he passed to triumph and to song in the rise of a mightier empire than he ever could have dreamed of or gained in Troy. Driven from Troy he founded Rome by the will of heaven.

In purity, in gentleness, in tenderness of sympathy with the suffering and unfortunate, and in susceptibility

to the charm of old associations, Virgil is indeed a "link between the ancient and the modern world" and a "precursor of Christianity"; and we have other two distinctive links in his representation of love as a sentiment and his pious resignation to the will of heaven. "It is in his verse," it has been thought, "that we may trace the first dawn of that sentiment to which all modern drama owes its main interest" and "which forms the main subject of modern fiction. . . . Nothing in ancient verse seems to us so closely allied with modern feeling as the meeting of Dido and Aeneas in the shades. The silence of wounded love, the hush of a mighty recollection that can as little revive as discard the emotions to which it points, are painted in those few lines, not certainly as a modern would have painted them, but with more force, because with more reticence, than a second-rate artist of our day would give them, and with more apprehension than any first-rate artist before Virgil could have given them. We meet in his verse for the first time with something like the romantic sentiment of love."¹

And no one has inculcated the duty of resignation with more pensive thoughtfulness or pious zeal than Virgil. He had apparently no very settled convictions or consistent beliefs about the gods, or their relation to the world. Men and stars, and abstractions like Fame, and fauns and dryads, and all the gods of tradition are mixed up in his fancy in inextricable confusion, and yet also he seems inclined to accept the idea of an omniscient and omnipresent pantheistic god, or soul of the universe, as rational and likely.

¹ "Virgil as a Link between the Ancient and Modern World," by Julia Wedgwood, *The Contemporary Review*, July, 1877.

“Deum namque ire per omnes
Terrasque tractusque maris coelumque profundum ;
Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,
Quemque sibi tenues nascentem arcessere vitas.”¹

At one time he seems to identify the will of Jove with fate (*Aeneid* i. 254 *et seq.*), and at another time he seems to set them apart as separate powers (*id.* viii. 398-399). But, at any rate, and whatever be the relations between them, reverence the gods and pay your annual offerings (*Georgic* i. 338-350), and, whether it be Jove or fate that rules, be resigned to heaven's will. “What avails it to indulge so much in frenzied grief? These things happen not without the will of the gods” (*Aeneid* ii. 776-778). And “perchance the day will come when the memory of even this will be a pleasure. Through various mishaps, through sundry risks and chances, our course is to Latium; there the fates point to quiet resting-places, there heaven allows that the kingdom of Troy once more shall rise. Endure hardness, and reserve yourselves for better days” (*Aeneid* i. 203-207).

And now, in bringing this chapter to a close, we cannot do better than quote from an article by Principal Shairp on “Virgil as a Precursor of Christianity.” “His experience,” says the Principal, “would seem to have awakened within him a longing and aspiration after something purer, higher, lovelier, than eye or ear here discover. His poetry has the tone of one of whom it may be said in his own words—‘He was stretching forth his hands with longing desire for the farther shore.’ Therefore, while we may not, as former ages did, accept the fourth Eclogue as in any sense a prophecy of the Messiah, we need not be blind to that

¹ *Georgic* iv. 221-224.

which it does contain—the hope of better things, the expectation that some relief was at hand for the miseries of an outworn and distracted world. This expectation was, we know, widely spread in Virgil's day, and probably none felt it more than he. Likely enough he expected that the relief would come through the establishment and universal sway of the Roman Empire; but the ideal empire, as he conceived it, was something more humane and beneficent than anything the earth had yet seen—something such as Trojan may perhaps have dreamed of, but which none ever saw realized. His conception of the future work which he imagined the empire had to do contained elements which belonged to a kingdom not of this world. In his enthusiastic predictions regarding it we may say, in Keble's words—

‘Thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given.’

Taking then all these qualities of Virgil together, his purity, his unworldliness, his tenderness towards the weak and downtrodden, his weariness of the state of things he saw around him, his lofty ideal, his longing for a higher life than this daily one, I think we may say that in him the ancient civilization reached its moral culmination. When that civilization could produce such a spirit as his, which it could so little satisfy, does it not appear that the fulness of time was come? He was a spirit prepared and waiting, though he knew it not, for some better thing to be revealed.”¹

¹ *The Princeton Review*, September, 1879.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE, IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE—ENGLISH
LITERATURE.

THE “better thing to be revealed” for which Virgil was perfectly prepared and waiting appeared in Christianity. And in Christianity, as represented by the lives and teaching of Christ and His apostles, we have indeed in the truest and best of senses the Religion of Humanity—not the Positivist caricature of it which has assumed to itself the name, and which is without religion and without humanity, but the thing itself which binds us all together and to God in sympathy. When Christ appeared, the old world hardness vanished in the thought of the essential unity of the Divine and Human and of Universal Brotherhood. “One is your Father which is in heaven, and all ye are brethren.” And in the principle of judgment, “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me,” we have a new motive of action which at once took shape in pity and care for the poor, the oppressed, and the lonely of whatever nationality or caste, and in a yearning tenderness for the purity and peace of men the world over, and in self-sacrificing efforts and continuous labours for their good. And hence reforms of a humane description

and in all their ramifications unto this day. With all our cruelties in various ways, we are tenderness itself in comparison with pre-Christian times, and our sympathies are shown in a thousand practical ways unknown to preceding ages.

And the change introduced by Christianity into the thoughts and sentiments of men could not of course exist without showing itself by degrees in art in all its branches and in all directions. The contents of art became more peaceful and more hopeful in their character. The lion gave place to the lamb, the warrior with his sword and shield to Him who was the Prince of Peace, man in his bodily strength and beauty to man in his moral need craving the peace and purity of God, and the dread of death and of the gloom of the ghostly realms beyond to the longing for immortal life and the hope of the glory to be revealed. "Long before Constantine acknowledged Christianity by publicly joining it, the inner need of the young community had found its expression in significant forms. As, however, this entire life still bore the stamp of the rule of the Caesars, the effort after the outward representation of the new ideas of God was obliged to be satisfied at first with the forms afforded by the art of the heathen ages. Thus declining ancient art became the garment in which the young and world-agitating ideas of Christianity were compelled to veil themselves. The new wine had to be put into the old bottles, till it burst asunder the decaying vessels, and issued forth in a new form of art as in a vessel appropriate to itself. So wonderful and profound, however, are the laws which regulate the inner life of man, that in this way alone could an infinitely rich and new develop-

ment be rendered possible. While the early Christian age used the antique forms of art from necessity, it preserved for its future greatness those fundamental laws which could be the basis of the new structure, stripping off from the antique art treasures all that might not befit the new ideas, and retaining the healthy germ from which the tree of Christian art was to unfold with grand magnificence. In this lies the historical position and importance of early Christian art. It stands as a mediator between antique-heathenish life and the art of the true Middle Ages. Its beginning can be traced to the first century of the Christian era, and it reaches its close about the end of the tenth century, with the independent advance of Teutonic civilization.”¹

! But “when technical skill had again been mastered by those whose genius impelled them to it, and to whom leisure gave opportunity, and when Christianity had at length had time, amid the terrific confusion and destructions of almost uninterrupted war, to work the sense of its tender and majestic stories and of its revelations of realms above sight into the general consciousness of peoples, then came the wonderful new birth of poetry and art, the true Renaissance in all southern and central Europe. / We apply this name, in a limited sense, to the movement of the fifteenth century and after, which took its impulse from a renewed study of the antique monuments and life. In an equally just and a larger sense it applies to all that continuing and astonishing development of culture which sprang from deeper and broader forces as early as the thirteenth century. Its prophecies, at least, are to be traced in the more active political

¹ Lübke's *History of Art*, vol. i. pp. 275-276.

life, the acquisition of Latin authors, the development of universities, as well as in the beginning of mediæval art, in picture and church, in liturgy and music.

✧ The arts of design, in colour or in marble, came later to ampler development, but the strong impress of religion was on them. ✧ Who has not felt the prodigious change which passed upon painting, and which left its records in sculptured stone, when a real rapture or a real agony, of a person believed to be superhuman in essence and in relations, began to take the place of the self-conscious fancy which had sought to portray the Juno or the Diana, the Hercules or the Faun? Freedom, variety, naturalness, dignity, a new ethical tone, a larger and sweeter inspiration, came with the impulse of the new faith into the arts which heathenism had cherished and yet had dishonoured. The stimulated soul endued with fresh grace and a more eager force the animated hand; and so, and not otherwise, were born at last the world's masterpieces, the Assumption of the Virgin, the Last Communion of St. Jerome, the Sistine Madonna, the Transfiguration.

“Into the brain of builder and architect streamed, even earlier, the same surpassing and stimulating effluence from the august religion; and rock rose as in modulated psalms, fortress and palace being humbled and dwarfed by the temple for worship, when the solid quarry broke forth before genius into Gloria and Te Deum. Certainly, by consent of all, there has been thus far no art in the world like the Christian art. Its temples arose on a soil still quaking with tread of armies, and hot with the un-extinct fires of war; and the singular combination which the Christian records everywhere present of

the most minute touches of human biography with the vast, overshadowing, unsearchable reach of the realms supernatural—of the Lord who was a babe in Bethlehem, and after Redeemer and King of the world—this is the key alone sufficient, when applied to such art, to unlock the secret of its harmonies and its heights. Mighty columns, daintiest capitals, darkling shadows, glancing colours, the gleam of sunshine smiting through translucent gold, the crimson splashes spattering pavements, scutcheon and banner effulgent with royal purple, the dome that seems purposed to roof the world—they are not a medley, they are a marvel, by which the dulllest are impressed; and they could not have been, in their mysterious and astonishing combinations, except for the religion 'which the timid have trusted, by which genius has been profoundly searched and supremely exalted, and from whose power Christendom has sprung.'¹

Christianity has had a like effect in literature and science, in commerce and in politics, as in philanthropy and in art, and directly and indirectly in a thousand ways it has had a marvellous influence also in the development of our taste for the beautiful in the world around us. And we make the statement in the knowledge and with full appreciation of the love of the beautiful in nature which is shown in Hindu literature of a date anterior to Christianity. The Vedas may be full of "hymns to the mountains, the storms, the heavens, the sun, and the moon," and the *Sacotalá* and other products of the Hindu dramatic genius are marvellously rich in references to, and descriptions of, natural scenery. Some of

¹ Dr. Storr's *Divine Origin of Christianity*, lect. 7.

them have more of the sentiment of Thomson, or of Wordsworth even, than of Virgil or Homer. And so it might be suggested that the love of nature may be a gift of nations, just as a genius for art was of the Greeks, or for law of the Romans. And of course it is true that nations have their characteristic features just as individuals have; and some of them may, at corresponding stages of civilization, and with equal leisure and culture in other spheres, have a keener perception and an intenser love of the beauties of landscape than others. The Scotch, as compared with the English, have had from the earliest times in their literature a characteristic love of wild nature for its own sake and of colour in landscape, and a peculiar turn for natural description; ¹ just as in philosophy they have had a bent for intuitionism and idealism rather than for the sensationalism which has been characteristic of the English. Their religious creed and their politics too have been different on the whole from those of their neighbours south of the Tweed, though the difference in these, as in the former, cases may of course in part at least be traced to a difference in their environment material, social, and historical. But, whatever influence may be allowed to national bent and genius, it still remains true that the love of nature is pre-eminently characteristic of Christian nations, that it is as wide as Christian civilization whatever the nationality, and that in English literature it reveals its connection constantly, both in its earlier and later developments with Christian thought and influence and with Christian enterprise and energy.

¹ Stopford Brooke's *Primer of English Literature*, pp. 51 and 143.

And the reason of the special love for all natural beauty and landscape scenery in Christian nations it is not hard to see. There is the Old Testament influence, of which we have already spoken, to be always taken into account in connection with Christian thought and experience—the Old Testament as read in the light of the New; and there is the new tone of thought and feeling, of hope and gladness, introduced by Christ and His apostles, and especially Christ Himself, the Son of Man and of God, who hath sanctified the earth by His presence on it, making it sacred everywhere to sentiment as a grave. There is the thought (an old one which He gave with new and a marvellously winning power) of God with His loving care in all things visible, and of the natural as within the sphere, and a revelation of the spiritual—of the ways and thoughts and purposes of Him whom we love and adore as our Father in heaven. And lily and mountain and sea and shore are linked in thought and affection with Himself, the Christ who walked the waves, and spake, as never man spake, of grass and sparrow and sheep and shepherd, and fields of grain, and the hairs of our head—hallowing all by His word and presence, and opening the kingdom of heaven by parable. For the world to Him was no dead mechanism, or product by chance of jumbling atoms, but a thing of divine significance and intent—the voice and symbol of a Power and Presence that cannot be put by. And with earliest Eastern savage gazing at the Dawn as with modern Briton, with ancient Hindu as with Wordsworth, it was the felt divinity of things that chiefly made them objects of regard and worthy of admiration; and, without it, it is questionable whether there could be any real

enthusiasm for natural scenery to any extent in any one. Mere prettiness or simple beauty in a scene or landscape may appear to us but trivial or tame. It is the grandeur and sublimity of a place that is its great attractive power; and the sublimity of the world once felt enhances, as we shall find, the value and beauty of every tree and flower. And Christ, in the mystery of the life divine, brings heaven about us as in our infancy, giving the grass and the flowers a flush of divine affection, and making us realize that when we look through microscope into worlds invisible, as well as when we follow the paths of the stars, or gaze on mountain grandeur, we are following the ways of working and seeing the signs of the care of Him who built the suns, and poised the planets in their spheres, and said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And the thought and feeling, mingling in their influence with the vision of a world redeemed and apocalyptic glories and hopes to be realized, have given to the sight of us all when looking upon nature something of "the consecration and the poet's dream." The deepest emotions of the soul have been stirred—affection for God and for man; and so to the old and to the young, and to commonplace people as well as to poets,

"There are gleams of Thee and glory
In the daffodil."

It is almost impossible, we should say, to exaggerate the importance of Christianity as an influence in developing a taste for natural beauty, and especially when it is taken in connection with the Old Testament, with which it is so closely and so naturally and continually linked. It puts the development of the affections towards God and towards man, and the love

of all things lovely and of good report before us among the first of duties ; and when we take these in connection with the thought of all things visible manifesting divine wisdom and power (Rom. i. 20), and of all things visible and invisible having been created by Christ, and for Him and consisting in Him (Col. i. 16-17), could any set of doctrines and of moral and spiritual precepts be imagined that would be more likely to give rise in the people—when their outward circumstances, social and political, would admit of it—to a love of landscape, or to make heaving, lonely hills and rugged shores attractive to the crowd ? With such a faith and with such an outlook on the world we may be alone, and yet we are not alone ; for in the heights of the heavens, as on mountain sides, and in the flowers of the field, there is the same humane and yearning Spirit of Love and of Friendship in whom all things consist, and for whom they were and are created. The universe is no longer an alien thing, but one with ourselves in the unity of creative thought and purpose, by and for Christ in whom all things consist.

But a great revolutionary idea, or a new system of spiritual life and thought, is not like a gourd that will grow in a night and perish in a night and leave not a trace behind it. In proportion to its value likely will be the slowness of its reception into the heart of communities and of the world at large ; and the more permanent and the more extensive finally will its influence be. And Christianity as a spirit of life and power among the people is no exception to the general rule. It has its laws and its conditions of growth like other things. And in the growth of the love of nature as shown in English Literature—which from its beginning to its close is essentially a Christian

Literature—there may be said to be, roughly speaking, three distinct and well marked stages ; and these stages, of course, like the grades of evolution generally through which man has passed, may be found co-existing in society in different individuals, and they correspond to different modes in which the world may be regarded by any of us at any time.

First, there is the stage in which there is the love of the beauty of individual objects in their isolation, and without any thought for the time of their divinity, or of their meaning and suggestiveness as symbols, or of the unity of all things in God. We see the beauty of a flower or a fruit, or of a colour in abstraction from everything else, and we are pleased with it instantaneously, and express our admiration accordingly, and in different ways according to our age, our disposition, and our familiarity or want of familiarity with it. This is the childlike, unreflective stage in relation to the beautiful in nature ; and in English Literature it may be said to last from the earliest times to the end of the seventeenth century. Not that there are no indications of something more before the end of that time, but that it is characteristic of the time that the poets were content with an occasional expression of their admiration of the simple visible beauty of the things around them in nature. It is not so much the grand, nor the sublime, nor even the picturesque in landscape as a far-stretching view of natural scenery that is the object of sentiment and regard, as the appearance of leaves, or of flowers in spring or summer, or the song of birds, or the looks of this or that or the other thing in isolation and abstraction from the rest of the universe as a whole. In the Robin Hood Ballads it is the greenness of the leaves,

and the singing of birds, and the freshness of the flowers that is the charm in the woods and fields—these things and nothing else.

“ Whan shaws beene sheene, and shraddes full fayre,
And leaves both large and longe,
It's merrye walkyng in the fayre forrest
To heare the small birdes songe.

The woodweele sang, and wold not cease,
Sitting upon the spraye,
Soe lowde, he wakened Robin Hood
In the greenwood where he lay.”¹

The contents of the song—leaves and birds—are essentially the same as those of passages we have quoted from the Greek and Roman poets; but the sentiment is different, and a deeper feeling, a heartier response, is stirred within us by it. It is evident that something has happened since Virgil's time.

In Chaucer we have the same thing intensified—a keen delight in the greenness of fields and the varied colours of leaves; in flowers with their perfumes, and in the daisy especially in the mornings of May; in the singing of birds in the hedge-rows and trees, and in watching their movements; and in the babbling of streams,

“ Swymmynge ful of smale fisshes lyghte,
With fynnes rode and scales sylver bryghte.”²

And it is not merely that he was pleased with these things when they happened to come in his way: he was so possessed by them that he had to go forth in early morning privately by the woods and into fields, as he tells us, to have converse with them and to hear

¹ “Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne.”

² “The Assembly of Fowles.”

what the birds and the flowers had to say to him, for he thought that he knew what they meant.

“As long as I lay in that swownynge,
Me thought I wist al that the briddes mente,
And what they seyde, and what was her entente,
And of her speche I had good knowynge.”¹

And when a goldfinch, which he had been watching
“leaping pretile from bough to bough,” began to sing,

“The nightingale with so mery a note
Answered him, that all the woode rong
So sodainly, that as it wer a sote,
I stood astonied; so was I with the song
Thorow ravished, that till late and longe,
Ne wist I in what place I was, ne where;
And ay, me thoughte, she song even by mine ere.”²

And, what between “so passing a delicious smell” of
the fresh green trees around him and the song of the
bird, he felt as if in Paradise where he wanted to be,
and he could not go farther.

“And on the sote grass
I sat me downe; for, as for mine entent,
The birddes song was more convenient,
And more pleasaunt to me by many fold
Than meat or drink, or any other thing.”³

We would search in vain in literature for any simpler
expression of pleasure in the song of birds; and in
Chaucer we have enough to show us that the common
talk about joy in nature “for its own sake” being a
very modern sentiment is more of literary cant than
anything else. Chaucer's range of sympathy with

¹ “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale.”

² “The Flower and the Leaf.”

³ *Idem.*

natural life and scenery may not be very wide, but, in its own sphere, it is as keen and disinterested as any aesthetic pleasure can be supposed to be.

Spenser, in some of his minor poems, such as the "Shepherd's Calender," "Virgil's Gnat," and the "Epithalamion," shows, though with less of simplicity and directness than Chaucer, something of the same delight in leaves, and grass, and birds, and budding trees, in flowers, and brooks, and genial air,—And in "An Hymne in Honour of Beautie" and "An Hymne of Heavenly Beauty" he treats us to Christianized Platonic speculations about the origin of the beauty of things seen, and the relation of the beauty seen to patterns of things in the heavens and to God Himself, "this world's great Workmaister" in His "Divine Eternall Majestie." But God as the "Workmaister" only is still afar—not a felt Presence of Consecration, but one to be reasoned to as in the heavens, where all the real essences and forms of beauty are supposed to be. In Shakespeare we get nearer perhaps to modern sentiment in which earth and heaven mingle. He gives us numerous lovely pictures of natural beauty in still more lovely language often, and with a single stroke of the pen; and while "the power of the mountains," as has been noticed, "is not expressed in his poetry," he yet saw the glorious mornings on their tops, and he was not a stranger to at least the rising feeling of sublimity in view of nature's grandeur.

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion like an angel sings,
 Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins:
 Such harmony is in immortal souls;
 But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
 Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it."¹

The emotion of the sublime, it would seem, is there implied. But we are not yet consciously face to face with God in breathless adoration, when speech of any kind, even prayer, would be felt to be out of place, and unbecoming and unholy. And with Milton, in some respects the sublimest of poets, we are left even farther away from the holiest in nature than with Shakespeare; and the beauty of landscape, while admired, still remains practically an unconsecrated element—the work of God indeed, but not yet His living art, and still less His presence itself in manifestation.

But there is something in Milton that is more noteworthy, to one who is seeking for a philosophy of the development of taste for natural beauty, than his vague and conventional paradisiacal landscape and his combination of flowers of different seasons, or even than his cottage whose

"Chimney smokes
 From betwixt two aged oaks."

We would expect of course that as a poet of the seventeenth century he would have an eye for beauties which have had a charm for man since his advent perhaps in creation; but it is not everyone who has let us into the secrets, as he has done, of the difference in width and intensity of the tastes of those days and ours for landscape in its wilder aspects. In the Robin Hood ballads we have the idea of lawlessness and robbery—

¹ *The Merchant of Venice*, act v.

Robin himself is the embodiment of these ; in Spenser we have mention of

“ Lightfoot mayds, which keepe the dore
That on the hoary mountayne use to towre :
And the wyld wolves which seeke them to devoure ” ;¹

and in Shakespeare too we have fairies and sprites of all descriptions ; and all such things were calculated to hinder men’s enjoyment of those aspects of nature especially in which we now delight. But in Milton’s “ *Comus* ” we have a direct, and reiterated, and very noticeable expression within brief compass of the dangers to which people were exposed, or thought themselves exposed, and of the fears which worked upon their fancy and drove them in shrinking from forest, and cave, and mountain, and all lonely rugged lands and secret spots of nature. We have there “ *pert fairies* ” and “ *dapper elves* ” tripping it by moonlight on tawny sands, and wood nymphs “ *deck’d with daisies* ” keeping their pastimes by “ *dimpled brook and fountain brim.* ” We have the way that—

“ Lies through the perplex’d paths of this drear wood
The nodding horror of whose shading brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger.”

And the danger threatened to passengers was great and much to be abhorred and feared ; for, disbelieve it who might and speak of the story as fabulous, it yet was true that—

“ Within the navel of this hideous wood
Immured in cypress shades a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill’d in all his mother’s witcheries.
And here to every thirsty wanderer

¹ “ *Epithalamion.* ”

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
 With many murmurs mix'd, whose pleasing poison
 The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
 And the inglorious likeness of a beast
 Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
 Charactered in the face; this I have learnt
 Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
 That brow this bottom glade, whence night by night
 He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
 Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey."

Throughout the *Comus* we have "gorgons, hydras, and chimaeras dire," or horrors as bad, and all the old-world fears of witchcraft and sorcery revived in poetry, and

"A thousand fantasies

Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
 And airy tongues that syllable men's names
 On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses,"

and all of them calculated, as we have frequently insisted, to drive men in fear from spots associated with them and their names. And hills and caves had their dangers as well as woods and shores, and robbers were to be feared as well as sorcerer, goblin, or fairy, or other "evil thing that walks by night, in fog or fire, by lake, or moorish fen." Evil man and evil thing might be ward off by chastity, but still they were there and had to be taken account of. And in such a state of society and with such beliefs no hill, nor wood, nor cave, nor lonely shore, nor solitary tarn, however lovely, could have much attraction for men in general, or much in it to tempt a poet to dwell on it with rapture in his song. Beautiful to the eye, they were yet "eerie," "horrid," "infamous" in thought and feeling, and carried with them by association loathing

and not delight. And with the same associations we find the same fear to-day, and the same inability to rejoice in the beauty of scenery in which the fearless revel. Driving one early summer morning along the western coast of Arran, we came by a turn of the road to a lovely, though a somewhat lonely, spot, when to the exclamation, "What a beautiful place!" the driver, a young man, replied, "Aye; its gayan eerie"—as if it were only a likely place for robbery or ghosts, and the sooner we were out of it the better.

In the second stage of the development of a taste for natural beauty, as made known by English Literature, the belief in fairies, and witchcraft, and the fear of robbers, etc., has to a large extent disappeared. But we have traces still in poetry, as in history, of such obstructive influences to the free enjoyment of life and of the beauty of God's creation. Thomson speaks of village stories about fairies haunting unfrequented valleys from fall of eve through summer nights.¹

"While well attested and as well believed,
Heard solemn, goes the goblin-story round
Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all."²

And people wandered far to avoid the grave of the suicide; and "the lonely tower," he tells us,

"Is also shunn'd; whose mournful chambers hold
(So night-struck Fancy dreams) the yelling ghost."³

And the poet himself thought of angel forms and voices appearing and addressing man as of old in the silence of the night in various sequestered spots—

"Shook sudden from the bosom of the sky
A thousand shapes, or glide athwart the dusk,

¹ "Summer," 1671-1674.

² "Winter," 618-620.

³ "Summer," 1678-1680.

Or stalk majestic on. Deep-roused, I feel
A sacred terror, a severe delight,
Creep through my mortal frame ; and thus, methinks,
A voice than human more, the abstracted ear
Of fancy strikes," etc.

And so again in "Autumn" from 1028 to 1034.
Cowper, on the other hand, speaks of thieves and
robbers by night, and says that

"E'en daylight has its dangers : and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds,
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold."¹

And in several of his poems Burns gives us an idea of
the superstitious fears of the country lads and lasses of
his time and neighbourhood, and draws a picture in his
"Tam o' Shanter" which was calculated in his day to
freeze the soul of the belated traveller.

It is noticeable, however, that in this second period,
which may roughly be said to embrace the eighteenth cen-
tury, the obstructive influences to a free delight in nature
to which we have referred belong almost exclusively
to *night*, and therein differ from those in the preceding
centuries, and seem to indicate, by the very fact that
they cannot bide the light, their early disappearance
wholly in growing light and knowledge. Gods and
goddesses, and man-eating ogres, and beasts of prey,
and giants, and robbers might be met with by day as
well as in the night ; but fairies, and ghosts, and angels
good or bad, as referred to by poets of the period with
which we are dealing, are creatures specially of the
night ; and that is close to the thought of their un-
reality and their final disappearance from expectation
in experience.

¹ *The Task*, book 4.

But not only is there in this period a dying out of superstitious fears and of lawless robber bands, there is also, as in contrast with the idea of God as a "great workmaister," whose home was in Heaven only and whose work was in the past, the rising feeling and conviction of the *immanence of God* in nature and of the universality of His love and care ; and, as with Hebrew bards and prophets, though with an added Christian tenderness of sentiment, Nature—not this or that object merely, but Nature as a whole—is seen in its God, and is loved for His sake and clung to as a Divine revelation of beauty and goodness. "These," says Thomson in his Hymn,

"These as they change, Almighty Father ! these
Are but the varied God. The rolling year
Is full of Thee. Forth in the pleasing Spring
Thy beauty walks, Thy tenderness and love."

And herbs, and fruits, and flowers—"His breath perfumes them and His pencil paints" ; and

"The scarcely-waving pine
Fills the brown shade with a religious awe."

And Cowper follows in the same strain, but with less of Deism pure and simple and with more of Christianity. There lives and works, he says, "a soul in all things, and that soul is God." But God is to be thought of in the light of the Christian revelation ; and the "soul in all things" is one with the life and spirit of Him who said to Thomas, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father ?"

"But all are under one. One spirit—His
Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows—

Rules universal nature. Not a flower
 But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
 Of His unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
 Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
 And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
 In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
 The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth."¹

And to Burns the winter, as he tells us, was the favourite season of the year, because, with the wild winds' rage and devastating blast his spirit rose in contemplation unto Him of whom it is said "that the clouds are His chariots," and that He "walketh on the wings of the wind." "There is scarcely any earthly object," he writes in one of his letters, "gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me—than to walk in the sheltered side of the wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to him, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.'" And, with Thomson, who thought of Universal Love "from seeming evil still educing good," and with Cowper who saw "a God employ'd in all the good and ill that chequer life," he practically accepted optimism as his creed in reference even to his woes.

"Here firm I rest, they must be best,
 Because they are Thy will."

And discerning

"A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
 Terrestrial in the vast and the minute;
 The unambiguous footsteps of the God,

¹ *The Task*, book 6.

Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds."¹

they—the men of whom we have been speaking—felt a new “divine delight” in nature, a keener joy, and as if their eyes had been opened to a fairer world around them.

“His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
Makes all still fairer. As with Him no scene
Is dreary, so with Him all seasons please.”²

And they loved nature, with all that they saw therein
“of beautiful or grand,”

“Not for its own sake merely, but for His
Much more who fashion'd it.”³

And the minute as well as the vast, and the lowly in life as well as the great, were, in consequence of the rising conviction of the continued presence and care of God, more noticeably than in preceding times esteemed as worthy of regard. The poor came to be honoured in song, and the mere trappings of a man, apart from his inward worth, to be held in disdain. Insects even in their myriad forms were thought to be not only worthy of observation, but of a place in literature. And the weak and helpless, and the unfortunate even among the beasts, were taken to the heart in sympathy and spoken of with pity and with tears. In all the great poets of the period—in Thomson, and Gray, and Goldsmith, and Cowper, and Burns—there is a noticeable tenderness of reference to the unfortunate and the lowly, of sympathy with animals in misfortune or pain, and a hatred of all oppression of the weak by the strong. Home, too, and country were

¹ Cowper's *Task*, b. v.

² *Idem*, b. vi.

³ *Idem*, b. v.

hallowed more than ever and clung to with greater reverence and love.

And while there is in this stage of development an evident enlargement and intensification of the sympathies with all forms of natural life through their felt connection with the Divine, and, for the same reason, a deepening love of landscape of the more home-like kind, there is not wanting evidence of a joy in mountain grandeur and the wilder aspects of the world generally. There is not much of it, it is true (though there is some), in the better known poems of the period. We have indications of it in "the dripping rock," the "mountain's misty top" which "brightens with the dawn," and "the mountain's brow illumined with fluid gold" of Thomson; and in the towers and temples, battlements and fanes, "mouldering," "ivy-mantled," "antique," of Goldsmith, Gray, and Cowper. But it is more marked in the letters of Gray, in which, when describing Alpine scenery, he speaks of "the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld"; and in the essays of writers like Burke and Reid and Alison we find it unmistakably enough. But above all do we find it in the literature of the Scottish Highlands, which gives us the very heart and soul, as well as the outward scenery in all its aspects, of mountain and moor. "Even to this day," it has been said, "when one is alone in the loneliest places of the Highlands, in the wilderness where no man is, on the desolate moor of Rannoch, or among the gray boulders of Badenoch, when

‘the loneliness
Loadeth the heart, the desert tires the eye,’

at such a time, if one wished a language to express the

feeling that weighs upon the heart, where would one turn to find it? Not to Scott; not even to Wordsworth, though the power of the hills was upon him if upon any modern. Not in these, but in the voice of Cona alone would the heart find a language that would relieve it";¹ or, perhaps we may whisper, in the voice of Duncan Macintyre. For, as the same authority we have quoted writes, in his *Ben Doran* he (Macintyre) "dwells with most loving minuteness on all the varied features, and the ever-changing aspects of the mountain which he loved as if it were a living creature and a friend." And, "besides this, in no poem on record have the looks, the haunts, the habits, and the manner of the deer, both red and roe, been pictured so accurately and so fondly, by one who had been born and reared among them, and who loved them as his chosen playmates."²

Macintyre's verse is not within the range of English literature—no, no more than Ossian's, but he strictly belongs to the eighteenth century with which we have been dealing, and he adds another to the many proofs which have come before us that the love of nature in even her wilder aspects is not a product merely of nineteenth century culture and civilization. And yet "the thoughts of men are widening with the process of the suns," and with their thoughts their needs, their aspirations, and their sympathies with the life of man and the life divine. And with the present century we come to the third and last stage of our growth in the love of nature as shown in English literature; and it is marked by a still deeper realization of the presence of God in nature than is shown by Cowper and other immediately preceding bards.

¹ Principal Shairp's *Aspects of Poetry*, lect. ix.

² *Idem*, lect. x.

✧ In the first stage, as we have seen, God and Nature were held apart in thought like the machine-maker and the machine. The world was his handiwork—a thing made in the past, and He the Creator, or “the world’s great Workmaister,” as Spenser calls Him, was thought of as practically in the heavens somewhere far away amid splendours manifold, but invisible to mortals like ourselves. And during that stage the objects of sense were seen to be beautiful in their isolation and apart from any feeling of the unity of nature, or of the life divine within them. And so there is little or no expression of the emotion of sublimity in view of nature’s grandeur, and little appreciation of the distinctly picturesque even. But in the second stage God was felt as near—as living in His works by act of creation constantly—

“The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God”:¹

the fragrance of flowers and fruit being but His breath
and their colours His art,

“Whose breath perfumes them, and whose pencil paints.”² ✕

✧ And nature, being thus viewed as the outcome of a continuous creative act and the art of God—“a present God”—became more attractive and more worth observing. ✕ If God “so clothed the grass of the field,” there could be nothing trivial in watching its changing hues and in noting the least feature of the landscape to even the shimmer of an insect’s wing. On the contrary, the observation of the smallest details became like a re-

¹ Cowper’s *Task*, b. vi.

² Thomson’s *Hymn*.

religious duty, and admiration of the beauties perceived like an act of devotion. And the wider the sweep of the eye, and the more varied the landscape, the more was there seen of the ways of God and the more was the soul filled with a religious awe through expanded admiration. Landscape proper and the picturesque became consequently more attractive, and were more sought after and more spoken of; and the grand has also its place to some extent in poetry. But there is hardly any expression in poetry of the emotion of the sublime in view of natural scenery. There are moralizings and soliloquizings—many of them—which may seem to imply it; but they strike us for the most part as conventional and strained, and make us feel as if those who were using them were trying to work themselves up to a mood of mind which they *might be in* rather than expressing what they actually felt of awe or sublimity. But when we come to the nineteenth century, the third stage of the development of the love of nature, the scene before which the poet stands may no longer be consciously thought of as even the *creation* of a present God, but imaginatively felt to be the Invisible Himself in His loveliness and grandeur to eye and to ear. And the soul of the poet, “haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind,” is consequently for the moment “breathless with adoration.”

“Oh then what soul was his, when, on the tops
Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun
Rise up and bathe the world in light! He look'd—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
And ocean's liquid mass beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank

The spectacle ; sensation, soul, and form
 All melted into him ; they swallow'd up
 His animal being ; in them did he live,
 And by them did he live : they were his life.
 In such access of mind, in such high hour
 Of visitation from the living God,
 Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.
 No thanks he breathed, he preferr'd no request ;
 Rapt into still communion that transcends
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
 That made him : it was blessedness and love ! ”¹

The passage illustrates the attitude of mind in view of nature which is characteristic of this century as compared with the last and times preceding. The universe no longer stands between the soul and God as a hindrance to our vision of Him. It is not a veil ; it is the mystery of His presence. It is still nature for its own sake, if you will, and nature for its own sake more than ever, that we love ; but it is nature in its felt divinity and become companionable in the Son of Man. It is the spirit in the storm, as of old, and not the winds by themselves, that men commune with ; but it is the spirit become humane while adorable, and like Him “who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brow.”

We might illustrate our position with other passages from Wordsworth and Shelley and Emerson and other nineteenth century authors ; but considerations of space and time and of the patience of readers will not now allow us. Nor can we wait to show at length how this new attitude of mind in relation to nature made her still more attractive as a thing of infinite beauty, and opened up the way for still more enthusiastic

¹ Wordsworth's *Excursion*, b. i.

admiration and description in poetry and prose. Suffice it to say that Wordsworth, in his "Lines composed above Tintern Abbey," declares, after that oft-quoted sentence about a presence that disturbed him with the joy of elevated thoughts,

"Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows, and the woods,
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create
And what perceive : well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being ;"

and that, contemporaneous with the realization of nature as a revelation to the senses of Him who is the All in All, there has been developed in all grades of society an enthusiasm for landscape and for natural beauty generally which has put many other subjects of poetic interest comparatively into the shade ; and that in letters and magazines and novels and sermons and scientific treatises, in poetry and in painting, in domestic plant cultivation as well as in gardening, and in almost every conceivable way in which ideas of natural beauty can be conveyed to the mind, the craving for gratification aesthetically is responded to and increased ; and that facilities for sight-seeing and travel in summer, which is one glad holiday, are innumerable and are annually increasing with the increasing demand. To shore and to sea, to mountain and loch, and to solitary valley and crag is the cry ; and no shore that can be reached, however desolate, is unvisited, and no mountain that is accessible, however

dangerous, is unscaled ; and the soul of the people, in its demand for the beautiful and sublime, is still hungry as the grave, and cries out incessantly with still growing earnestness and vehemence, " Give, give to us or we die."

" The cataract's horn
Has awakened the morn ;
Her tresses are dripping with dew—
O, hush thee and hark !
'Tis her herald, the lark,
That's singing afar in the blue.
Its happy heart's rushing
In strains wildly gushing,
That reach to the revelling earth,
And sink through the deeps
Of the soul, till it leaps
Into raptures far deeper than mirth.

All nature's in keeping !
The live streams are leaping
And laughing in gladness along ;
The great hills are heaving,
The dark clouds are leaving,
The valleys have hurst into song.
We'll range through the dells
Of the bonnie blue bells,
And sing with the streams on their way ;
We'll lie in the shades
Of the flower-covered glades,
And hear what the primroses say.

O, crown me with flowers
'Neath the green spreading bowers,
With the gems and the jewels May brings ;
In the light of her eyes,
And the depth of her dyes,
We'll smile at the purple of kings.
We'll throw off our years,
With their sorrows and tears,

And time will not number the hours
We'll spend in the woods,
Where no sorrow intrudes,
With the streams and the birds and the flowers." ¹

Those lines express very well within a narrow sphere of it the spirit of the age in its enthusiasm for natural scenery ; and it now remains to us for the present only to indicate in brief some of the influences, in addition to the change in the conception of the relation of God to the world, which have been at work in developing and intensifying the love of nature which is so characteristic of our times.

We have laid stress in this and preceding chapters on some of the hindrances to a love of the beautiful in nature, such as the fear of wild beasts, and of robbers and giants and ghosts, and so forth. And, except in remote country districts where evening stories may prolong the delusion, these have practically all disappeared in our wider knowledge and our quieter times ; and now there is everything to hasten instead of to hinder our love of what is beautiful or picturesque or grand in nature. We have every facility for travelling by rail or river or sea, and that travelling brings comparison of different scenes and countries in conversation and writing and landscape painting and photograph and other descriptive means ; and the accounts which are thus given of places increases in turn the desire for sight-seeing, and swells the number of travellers. Novels and poetry, like those of Sir Walter Scott, by their historical references have made places famous, and points of direction, consequently, to sight-seers from all parts of the world in this hero-worshipping age. Mountain and valley and cave and old castle

¹ Alexander M'Lachlan's *Poems and Songs*.

have in that way got as a mania into the imagination of men, and begotten in part too a love of loneliness in land and general desolation. Some sixty years ago the Highlands, it has been said by one who knew them well, were "a land of distance and darkness," and "steamers had not mingled their smoke with the mists of the hills." But when Scott adopted that part of our country as "the subject of romantic story and song, investing its scenery, its feudal history, its chiefs, clans, old traditions, and wild superstitions with all the charm of his genius, then began a new era of centred comfort in every spot which his magic wand had touched. *The Lord of the Isles* and *The Lady of the Lake* became the pioneers of the tourist. Good roads took the place of the old bridle-paths winding among the heather. Coaches-and-four bowled through wild passes where savage clans used to meet in deadly combat. Steamers foamed on every loch, and banished the water kelpies. Telescopes were substituted for second sight. Waiters with white cloths and white towels received the travellers where red deer used to sleep undisturbed. The eagles were banished from the mountains, and 'Boots' reigned in the valleys."¹

And of course among those who were thus drawn to the Highlands and other places were men with brush and easel in anxiety to transfer the scenery they saw to their canvas; and that would demand accuracy of observation, and give rise to a deepening interest in all the varied aspects of the changing seasons. And, then, add to influences like these the increasing concentration of population in towns and cities, with the longing which it inevitably begets by reaction for freedom for a while from the constraints of society and the

¹ Dr. Norman Macleod's *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish*, c. 17.

dust and the smoke and the heat of the streets in summer, and so forth ; and to that put the widening study of natural history and geology and other sciences—all of them demanding special care and niceness in observation, and creating an interest in all that pertains to the material world ; and we get a combination of reasons for the widespread taste for natural beauty characteristic of our age which are amply sufficient in themselves, without resorting to any more than doubtful theory about a change in the organ of vision, or supposing that our eyes are better than those of our predecessors in all the bygone ages of the world. Our eyes are no better than an Indian's in the wilds of America, or a native Australian's ; but just as a man whose eyesight is growing dim with age can see a meaning and a beauty in his Bible or in the page of Shakespeare which he could not see with all the piercing vision of his youth—so may we, with our changing life, emotionally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually, and in our altered circumstances, have an interest in the beauties of the material world to which savage and sage alike of old were utterly indifferent. The change is not so much a change in our eyesight as a change in our sphere of interest through a change of circumstances and the growth of that knowledge which is “ widening with the process of the suns.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TASTE, IN RELATION ESPECIALLY TO THE
BEAUTIFUL IN NATURE: THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN TIMES.

“WITH regard to children, it is to be expected, on the general theory of evolution by inheritance, that if we were attentively to study the order in which their mental faculties develop, we should find that the historical sequence is, as it were, a condensed epitome of the order in which these faculties were developed during the evolution of the human species.”¹ And on the same general theory, and because it is included in the evolution of the mental faculties, we should expect that the development of taste in the individual would be an epitome of the development of taste from the earliest of times in the history of life on our globe till the present moment—that the chronological sequence would be the same in each. And if we could assume that it was, we would have a ready means, it might be thought, of determining what men saw of the beauties of nature in early times, and that, without relying on merely negative evidence on the one hand, or slightly positive evidence on the other, we soon might settle the question whether the Greeks and Romans had any appreciation of landscape, or any perception of the grandeur of hills. But before proceeding on such an assumption we would

¹ G. J. Romanes on “Animal Intelligence,” *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1878.

have to settle with ourselves what man was to begin with, and what period in the evolution of the nations corresponds to the infancy, what to the childhood, what to the youth, what to the manhood, and what to the old age of the individual. Did the Greeks, say, belong to the childhood, youth, or manhood of the world? If to the manhood period, as their literature and art, and our ideas of time from an evolutionist point of view, would seem to warrant us in assuming, it would go without saying that they saw what we see now—a grandeur in crag and peak, and a glory in the hills, as well as a beauty in the rose; and that in emotional experience generally they were “in all points like as we are.” But that is just the point in dispute, and what it has been thought, we have the best of evidence for denying. And if with Hegel we take the Greeks as representing, not the manhood, but the youth of the world, the matter will not be mended, but rather made worse, if anything. For, so far as the material world is concerned, youth may perceive its beauties as readily as manhood, and, according to those who deny it of the Greeks, perhaps with even more emotion; and to speak of the Greeks as youthful intellectually might seem to some as more than paradoxical—as utterly absurd in the face of the fact that we look to them as our teachers in art and literature.

But why take the Greeks at all? or why take ourselves, the Britons of to-day, as representing the manhood of the world, or as summing up in ourselves in brief the experience of the bygone ages? Why not take the native Australians, or the Fiji Islanders, or the North American Indians? May they not lay claim to as great an antiquity by descent as ourselves?

And if so, why should they not be thought of as representing in their experience individually the course and the stages in epitome of the evolution of the race? And after settling the question of the nation to be chosen, we would have to ask similar questions respecting the individual whose experience might be supposed to be an epitome of that of the race. Are we to take one who has had all the advantages of the best education and culture, or one of the lowest and most ignorant in the land? And why the one rather than the other, seeing that they both belong to the nation and the nineteenth century?

But while we may have our doubts about "ontogeny," as Haeckel puts it, being "a recapitulation of phylogeny," either physically or intellectually, we can hardly escape the conviction of at least an analogy between them, and that the study of them comparatively may not only be interesting in itself, but profitable also for the understanding and thorough appreciation of either. Whether it be in the way of evolution by heredity or otherwise, there is a development in the taste of the individual, and there has also been in the line of history through the ages; and, without reason to the contrary, the likelihood is that there has been a correspondence in each in their different stages of advancement. "First the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear," would seem to express a law of progression in all organic growth; and we cannot conceive the different stages reversed without a manifest absurdity and contradiction of nature. And should we find that the course of the development of taste in the individual corresponds in the main with that which we have already traced through the nations

in art and literature, there will be so much more of a presumption in favour of our perception and judgment in either case ; but should it be discovered to be otherwise, the difference brought out will perhaps be still more valuable as stimulating to further observation and reflection.

What, then, are the facts of the case so far as we can get at them through our own experience and by observation of the lives of others ? Generally and in the main there can be little room for disagreement as to what they are among those who have given any attention to the subject, or who have had experience in the ways of children. Babies of a month or two old will be attracted especially by a brightly coloured object in motion ; and the flickering flame of a fire, which is an object of great attraction, seems to affect them at times, as the tremulous movements of the water in a quiet, bright day affects us at the beach when they hold us pleasantly in a silent moveless stare. The stillness and stare of babies give indications of similar feelings. But there is no perception of beauty in such a state, but only a nervous affection. And it is hard to say at what age exactly in any case the aesthetic sense is first shown. For

“ Who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square ?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed ?
Who that shall point as with a wand and say,
‘ This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain ’ ”¹

But we may say, I think, that from about a year and

¹ Wordsworth's "Prelude," b. ii.

onwards there is generally some appreciation, though it may be in an obscure and uncertain degree, of the *beauty* of colour. From that time a brightly coloured shoe or dress may begin to please ; and soon there is shown a fondness for imitative art in dolls and picture-books and drawings, however rude. And as we advance from mute and helpless infancy to self-dependence, our life becomes an "endless imitation" ; and, under the tuition of others, there is a growth in taste from the mere perception of colours to a sense of congruity in colours, and of symmetry in form, and fitness of apparel, and so on, till finally the adult state is reached, when the taste will be comparatively rude or refined, according to the nature and constitution of the individual, his station in life, the society in which he may move, his education, intellectual, emotional, moral, and religious, the age and the country of the world in which he may be living—and his whole environment, in short.

It is to be noticed, however, that while there is an advance in aesthetic perception and pleasure from childhood to manhood, and from the rudeness of the inexperienced peasant to the maturity of the most cultured in society, the taste of the child is probably always in unison with that of the adult so far as it exists, and that of the rawest boor with the best principles in art. A babe may choose a brilliant colour in preference to others ; but so would we if our mental grasp and experience were as narrow as its. A boy may make but a poor imitation of bird and beast and be pleased with it ; but draw another and a much better by its side, and he will tell you at once which is likest the animal drawn. We may smile at the oddities of dress of a country girl ; but if our ex-

perience were as limited as hers, we would be pleased with what pleases her; and, notwithstanding the apparent want of taste displayed in her own apparel, she would be as likely as anyone to choose from a company of ladies the most beautifully dressed among them, and to perceive and feel what a "guy" she herself was in comparison. What we call a want of taste is often not so much that as a want of materials on which taste can be shown, or a want of experience in the perception of material for contrast and comparison.

But, to return to the line of development, M. Perez remarks that "a gaudy picture-book will drive children wild with delight, even at the age of three, while the paintings of a master do not appeal to them at all"; that "beautiful statuary leaves them indifferent"; but that they will "watch with the greatest interest the tricks and antics of a dog, the flight of a bird, a boat gliding along." "Children," he says, "appreciate rural scenery as little as they do pictorial or sculpturesque beauty," and they "begin by feeling pleasure and admiration for isolated objects, and so much the more as they appear to them to be good or pleasant. Of masses," he observes, "they only perceive the general bulk; of harmonies in nature or in art, only the colours and the most salient points."¹ And though he was supposed to be speaking of children three years old or under, his remarks, the latter half of them especially, will apply almost equally well as a general rule to children who are double of that age and more. I call four children, whose ages range from seven to twelve, and who are neither unusually stupid nor unusually clever. They have had a fair education for their age, and they have read for themselves, and with

¹ *The First Three Years of Childhood*, c. 12.

pleasure, Grimm's and Andersen's fairy tales, *Robinson Crusoe*, and other such books for children, and the two oldest in addition quite a number of other stories, such as *The Wide Wide World*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the *Pilgrim's Progress*. And, having put before them a number of pictures, I ask them, which of them do you like best? telling them at the same time to take time and look at them carefully. I repeat the experiment several times with different pictures, trying all the while to get at the reason of their choice; and about the same results come out in every case. While they all unmistakably manifest some perception of the beautiful and a keen admiration of it at times, I find that the choice of the two youngest is determined for the most part by this or that object in the picture—a boat, or a house, or a lamb, or a funny face, or in general by what they have found to be agreeable, or what they would like to play with, and that the general outline and perspective are overlooked for the time in favour of some object in its isolation. The choice of the third is more free and independent, but still is hampered somewhat by a liking for this or that little feature in the picture which pleases by association. And the choice of the eldest is almost in every case the same as my own—the same with one exception, where a sheep's black face in the fore ground of a picture diverted her attention to another less lovely and picturesque on the whole. And I noticed that the freer the choice, the harder it was to give a reason for it. And why do you like the one rather than the other? I asked the youngest of the four. "That one is lonely," he said, pointing to the likeness of a lovely landscape, "there are no houses in it." And his choice fell on a bay with boats in it, and with a town in the

background. But when I asked the eldest the reason of her choice, she could only say, "O, I don't know. It is just pretty." Let me add that the outline of mountains with the light on them had its attractions for the two oldest, but no noticeable attractions for the other two.

It is one thing, however, to manifest taste in the selection of pictorial landscape when it is set before us and we are asked to make our choice, and it is another thing quite to show spontaneously, and without any suggestion of its existence, an admiration for real and natural picturesque scenery with all its lights and shades, its skyey and aerial influences. This will show a more advanced, a maturer taste than that. The child who, when asked to make a choice, would select from a lot of paintings the loveliest landscape among them, may show when in view of it but little appreciation of a far-outreaching, and beautiful, natural scene as a whole. And the same thing is true of the objects, or the separate features, of a landscape, as contrasted with the landscape itself. A brightly coloured sky, some green retreat, or a shady nook with stream or flowers, some bit of a landscape, that is to say, or some isolated object in it, will have its attractions long before the landscape itself in its unity and totality. Children of all ages, from three or four years and onwards, may have a keen delight in gathering flowers, in hunting butterflies o'er summer fields, in scampering in pursuit of beast or bird in woody glen or by winding river, and in gathering shells by murmuring sea, and in these pursuits they may unconsciously be gathering power for the full appreciation in the future of all that is beautiful in nature ; but to most boys, we suspect, the tawdry-tinselled coat of some buffoon in a vagrant gang

of showmen would be a grander sight than any scene or landscape that nature could present, and his silly, vulgar jokes more deeply moving, and tenfold more worth listening to, than all the lays of feathered throats together, the zephyr's sigh, the lullaby of rivers, or the roar of ocean. What pleases them best is what affords most excitement for the time and gives freest scope for the unimpeded exercise of their energies; and their pleasure in the beautiful is likely to be more sensuous and organic than intellectual. And it is well that it should be so. Far better for them to be running in excitement after bird, or butterfly, or flower, than to be gazing in abstraction on the fine gradation of atmospheric tints, or the graceful, waving outlines of far distant hills.

We have been speaking of children in general. But, of course, there may be exceptions to the rule. Heredity, and special training, and unusually favourable circumstances socially, and constant association with older people may make a child precocious; and, if there have been child musicians who have been beyond their masters in knowledge and execution, there may also be child admirers of nature whose likings are beyond the range of general calculation. Perhaps we have had instances of such precocity in Ruskin and Charles Kingsley. Their talk about their childhood's years would lead us to suppose that they were unusually early susceptible to influences from nature's beauties and grandeur—though in the language of the former, at least, there is not only his characteristic extravagance in expression, but also a manifest want of discrimination between the general joyousness of childhood with its excitement and surprise at novelty and the appreciation of what is distinctively beautiful or

grand in nature for its own sake ; and both of them, we suspect, Kingsley and Ruskin, were at the time of their writing sentimentally under the influence of Wordsworth's Ode, and labouring under the almost universal delusion that childhood is the happiest time of life and must be spoken of as such. But there is no law known, we allow, for the manifestation of genius ; and we can have no interest in denying an exceptional precocity in aesthetic perception in those who, like Kingsley, have been artistically and religiously inclined by nature and nurture. And, if there have been such precocious admirers of nature as we have been speaking of, they may be regarded as analogous to the Hebrews among the nations for a sense of sublimity, and to the Greeks in artistic taste in the world-wide development. Like the Greeks and the Hebrews in these respects, they have been in advance of their contemporaries or equals in age ; and, like the Greeks and the Hebrews too in the progress of the world, they may be as steps in the ascent of the national life. But just because they are exceptions, they may be left out of account in any general estimate of the individual life.

And now to advance a step, and still adhering to what may be regarded as typical in childhood, we may say that there is in it no well-marked or definite perception or emotion of sublimity. Wonder enough children may show, and show at trifles ; but wonder is not in any way to be identified with the perception or the emotion of the sublime. When wonder has begun with us the emotion of sublimity has ceased to be, and *vice versa* ; and, unless in exceptional cases, if there be any such, no one, we should say, who has not passed through childhood into youth and is at least

bordering on manhood, is likely to have had any experience of what we really mean by sublimity. That comes especially with our growth in the religious life and the opening of the ear to "the still, sad music of humanity" and the heart to "the burthen of the mystery." As boys we may chase with glee, as we have said, the gaudily painted butterfly, and see a prettiness in the perfect rose; we may even look with interest upon the many-coloured richness of an autumnal wood, or like at times to gaze into the tremulous blue of a summer evening sky, and watch the changing outline of its intersecting clouds; but we have not that quiet rapture of the soul in a mood more devout than prayer which we call the emotion of the sublime, and all the subtle analogies of things, all prophetic hints, and the deeper power of harmony escape us. Slowly we begin to catch occasional glimpses of nature's meaning and learn to read her thoughts. We cling more closely to her and hear her faintly murmuring in her dreams of sympathy and kinship; and mountain and wood and stream at length, no longer standing apart in hard disunion, begin to mingle in their grandeur with our blood and fill us with "sonorous cadences of things invisible." And more than ever then do they beam with glory, for all their heaving beauty seems a constant effluence from the Central Heart—love and joy and song made visible. Then heaven not only lies *about* us as in our infancy, when our view of it was bounded by the over-arching sky, but is a power *within* us too; its light no longer only light, but conscious life as well. If the "visionary gleam" has fled, a more substantial glory, a mightier joy, has come.

But the mention of the "visionary gleam" may recall to some the beautiful lines of Wordsworth—

“There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
 The earth, and every common sight,
 To me did seem
 Apparell'd in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream,” etc.

And the idea may be taken as opposed to the view which we have just expressed—that our love of nature grows with our growth from childhood into manhood, and abides with us as a source of deepening joy. But while there is a “something that is gone” from the life of every man among us, as there is a something that passes away with every period of life, the pleasures of novelty and of new-born wonder and of bounding animation are not to be confounded, as we have already remarked, with the still delight of the aesthetic contemplation of nature, nor is it to be thought of as passing when they pass away. Growing knowledge not only means the removing of novelty with its accompanying pleasure, but the enlarging also—not the lessening—of the sphere of the sense aesthetic and the wonder of creation. And we need not search far in Wordsworth’s poems to find that such was his experience ; for in the very ode in which he deplores the loss of the “celestial light,” “the glory and the freshness of a dream,” he speaks of a mightier joy as his : and almost uniting God and nature in his thoughts, he bursts into the passionate appeal —

“And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
 Think not of any severing of our lives !
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
 I only have relinquish’d one delight,
 To live beneath your *more habitual sway*.
 I love the brooks, which down their channels fret,
E’en more than when I tripp’d lightly as they :
 The innocent brightness of a new-born day
 Is lovely yet ;

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sobering colouring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality !
 Another race hath been and other palms are won,
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live ;
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears ;
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

And, turning to his "Tintern Abbey," we find him reasoning with himself, 'What though the coarser pleasures, the glad animal movements, the aching joys, and the dizzy raptures of my boyish days are now no more?' Not for these

"Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur ; other gifts
 Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learn'd
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth ; but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity,
 Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime," etc.—

the very thing, it has to be observed, that we have been saying of the growth of taste in people generally. The "sense sublime" was a later possession in Wordsworth's experience, and something more to be prized by far than any mere perception of beauty in his boyish days.

"We are not to suppose," says De Quincey, "that Wordsworth the boy expressly sought for solitary scenes of nature amongst woods and mountains, with a direct conscious anticipation of imaginative pleasure and loving them with a pure disinterested love on their own separate account. These are feelings be-

yond boyish nature, or, at all events, beyond boyish nature trained amidst the selfishness of social intercourse. Wordsworth, like his companions, haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, swimming, and sometimes of hunting, according to the Westmoreland fashion (or the Irish fashion in Galway), on foot: for riding to the chase is quite impossible from the precipitous nature of the ground. It was in the course of these pursuits, by an indirect effect growing gradually upon him, that Wordsworth became a passionate lover of nature at the time when the growth of his intellectual faculties made it possible that he could combine those thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and the ear."¹ So says De Quincey, and so the poet himself assures us; for, says he,

"Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities, and all
Their trivial pleasures."²

Wordsworth's experience as a boy, in short, was like that of us all—a light-hearted thoughtless merri-ment and animal gladness in the chase of insect, bird, and beast, with a perception of the beauty of flowers and of the wings of moth and butterfly and bird, and a pleasure in grove and by streams where there were materials especially for fun or fishing, but with little joy in the loveliness of landscape for its own sake. The joy came in later years and especially, as he tells us, when he had realized the "weight of all this unintelligible world," and God was felt to be everywhere and in everything; and the more that he felt His pre-

¹ Autobiographic Sketches.

² "Prelude," b. viii.

sence in realized sublimity, the more was each landscape attractive to him and the more did every flower and atom seem to share in the sublimity of the whole and give thoughts "too deep for tears." And hence there was nothing, however apparently mean or trivial, unworthy of his attention, and no beggar even by the way but was in some way in his estimation a fit subject for description as well as for charity; and in that respect his life has been a link in the progress of the ages, and poets and painters and novelists are now discovering that they do not need to look afar for material for their art any more than for a god for inspiration; and history gains in interest and beauty as it descends from the pomp of kings and of war to the homelier interests of the people and the details of daily life with the forces which are at work in society generally and which gradually shape the destiny of nations. There has been, and there still is, a progress in *the man* as in the child from an interest in the conspicuously bright, or great, or unusual, to the seeing of a greatness and glory in the apparently commonplace and trivial, and from the perception of the godlike in the miraculous to the sight of the divine in the quieter ministries of day and night and nature, and in character and in the beauty of meekness and the moral law.

∟ And now, if we sum up what we have been saying in this chapter and compare it with the course of development as exhibited in preceding chapters, we shall find, I think, that there is in the main a correspondence in the stages of the evolution of a taste for natural beauty in the individual and in the race, and not only so, but a correspondence also in the rough with the development of taste as revealed in English literature. In a general way we have found that

the taste of the individual advances from colours to congruity in colours and symmetry of form, and from form in individual objects to harmony in the relations of things combined, and from admiration of pretty little groups of things and pictorial landscape to the perception and love of the beauty of natural rural landscape for its own sake, and from love of natural landscape to the perception and emotion of sublimity; and we have found also that, when the latter stage is reached, our pleasure in nature is transformed and intensified through our contact consciously with a Presence Spiritual which we cannot put aside, and which hallows, or tends to hallow, all things, however mean in exterior or estate. But there is an advance, as we have said, in even manhood from the relics of our youthful love of display and conspicuity in manner, dress, or style in composition, to what is chaste in appearance and self-forgetful in action; from appearance merely to worth and substantiality, from what is only pleasing to ourselves to what is also for the good of others in ever-widening circles and relations. We pass from the material to the spiritual; from men individually and in their widening relations in our experience to humanity at large; from the observation of differences and divisions to the perception of a unity in all things; from the thought of what *should be* in a world of wrongs to the realization that when we take all things into consideration what should at any moment be in reality *is*, though not as a finality stereotyped and unchangeable, but only as a point and moment in the drama of creation; and so, finally, from fretfulness, from the seeming inequality of lots and the

apparent disorder in creation, to rest of spirit in the faith that God's will, which is good, is still fulfilled, and in it our own highest wish and prayer. We begin to see that somehow all things after all are as they should be, and as we would wish them to be, in the being of an endless change and progression till God be all in all.

CHAPTER VII.

CAN THERE BE A STANDARD OF TASTE?

WE have spoken at length of the development of taste, but we have not asked the question, Is there such a thing as a standard of taste by which we can judge of anything? And the question is an important one and a difficult one to answer. It is important, because, if there is a standard of taste, we should like to know what it is that we may know how to regulate our judgments by it, whether we are right or wrong in any particular case of reference or dispute, and how near we approach it, or how far we come short of it, in our actions and choice in everyday life; and, if there is none, no principle whatever before which art and actions can be brought in judgment, why then it would seem that there is in reality no ground of decision for what is in good or bad taste, that, in fact, there is no good or bad about it, that every taste is as good as every other, that preferences are mere matters of moonshine, and that, as there is neither truth nor falsity involved in their work, nothing either good or bad, but only less or more, artists—say sculptors or painters—might represent anything as anything else, or take the caricatures of *Punch* as their models for ideal human beauty without any possibility of being

reasonably found fault with for doing so. Whims, crotchets, idiocy, chaos—no matter what, in art on such a theory: the scrawl of a weakling pupil would show as much taste as the production of a master, and the braying of an ass might be preferred as music to Handel's *Messiah* without any chance of failure in judgment. There might be change on such a theory, but no improvement; and there could be no education, for there would be nothing to learn. That is what "*De gustibus non disputandum*," when rigorously applied in aesthetics, would lead us to—to idiocy and nothingness in art in all its departments, and to unreason everywhere.

But if we assume, to start with, that there must be a standard somewhere, some principle of judgment by which we are guided in all our decisions, then there is the difficulty of knowing where to find it, or who is to decide what it is. For there is, at first sight at least, an apparently endless diversity in tastes; and the trouble is to reconcile those tastes, so diverse and fluctuating, with the idea of any standard by which they can be tested. It may be, of course, that the diversity is largely apparent only, and by no means such as to be irreconcilable in general with a standard of judgment; and as we shall find ample reason, I think, in the next chapter for believing that such is the case, we need not dwell upon it in the meantime further than to say that, let the diversity be what it may, it evidently does not interfere with the free application of the judgments of society on any object in nature, art, or ornamentation. People will judge and decide, without any doubt of their competency, on the comparative merits of plants and

animals and dresses, of paintings and poets and furniture; and the awards of qualified critics and of judges at exhibitions are usually held to be rationally given, and to have truth at the root of them. But still that leaves the question to be settled as to what their standard of judgment is, and whether it is the true one. And the difficulty has not been lessened, but very much increased, by the vague and indefinite language which has been used about a standard. We speak of *the* standard of taste as if there could be, or as a matter of fact were, only one standard for everything in general, instead of a different standard, it may be, for every class or species of object on which we have to pass judgment. And perhaps it would help to put us on the path for a settlement of our question if, after asking, Is there a standard of taste? or What is the standard of taste? we would ask, A standard of taste for what? It would put us on our guard at least against attempting an answer to possibly an absurd or unreasonable question. A standard for objects in general must exclude, by the very conception of it, what is true in only particular cases; and, if so, it manifestly cannot be of much service to anyone in actual life where we have to deal, not with what is general, but with particular and individual objects. The standard for a good portrait may be one thing, and, if such a thing exist, that for a beautiful sunset another. So at least it might seem to a novice.

Before, however, trying to give an answer of our own to the question raised, let us look at some of the answers that might be given, or which have been advanced, or practically adopted, by others.

In consideration of the tastes and habits of different societies and nations, and the tyranny of fashion in every society, it might be thought that custom, or the generally prevailing opinion, was the only available standard of judgment. And that is practically the answer of Jeffrey. "As all men," he says, "must have some peculiar associations, all men must have some peculiar notions of beauty, and, of course, to a certain extent, a taste that the public would be entitled to consider as false or vitiated." And so, if one "conceive the ambition of creating beauties for the admiration of others, he must be cautious to employ only such objects as are the natural signs, or the inseparable concomitants of emotions, of which the greater part of mankind are susceptible; and his taste will then deserve to be called bad and false, if he obtrude upon the public, as beautiful, objects that are not likely to be associated in common minds with any interesting impressions." And so, it would seem, in that way of looking at it, that the standard of taste, so far as there may be allowed to be a good or bad taste at all, is to be the likings of the general public, or the sentiment of the crowd; and ~~the~~ the man who can suit himself most exactly to the wants of the people is the man who shows the greatest taste in things aesthetic, ~~and~~ and he who is least in harmony with the people shows the worst. And the theory has the merit of showing us the legitimate outcome of any pure association theory; and it contains, it may be, in faint foreshadowing and by implication, the truth that an artist, to succeed, must have regard to the wants of human nature, and that no mere whim, or arbitrary judgment, or freak of an individual or of a clique is ever in the least likely to be finally accepted as true, or as a genuine product

of any artistic faculty. But to make the judgment of "the much-despised many,—the crowd," the standard of genuine good taste, is to condemn every man who is in advance of his times, and who has to form the judgment by which he has to be appreciated, thus setting the same taste in opposition to itself, making it extremely bad when it is in the minority of one, and exceedingly good when it becomes the general judgment. And it leaves us also without any means of deciding between the judgments of the much-despised many in any two or more cases in opposition, and without any standard for the much-despised many in any case except that so they think and feel. In short, to make the popular taste the standard is practically to leave us without a standard, and to condemn the great original master artists as boors and donkeys till they have been voted into place, and crowned by the sentiment which they have themselves created; and it is to encourage to the utmost the race for popularity as the chief end of the artist,—which is to strike at the root of all that is great in art and in moral and spiritual life.

"Ask yourselves what is the leading motive which actuates you while you are at work," says Ruskin in advice to artists. "I do not ask you what your leading motive is for working—that is a different thing; you may have families to support, parents to help, brides to win; you may have all these, or other such sacred and pre-eminent motives, to press the morning's labour, and prompt the twilight thought. But when you are fairly *at* the work, what is the motive then which tells upon every touch of it? If it is love of that which your work represents—if, being landscape painter, it is love of hills and trees that moves you—if,

being a figure painter, it is love of human beauty and human soul that moves you—if, being a flower or animal painter, it is love and wonder and delight in petal and in limb that move you, then the Spirit is upon you, and the earth is yours, and the fulness thereof. But if, on the other hand, it is petty self-complacency in your own skill, trust in precepts and laws, hope for academical or popular approbation, or avarice of wealth,—it is quite possible that by steady industry, or even by fortunate chance, you may win the applause, the position, the fortune, that you desire;—but one touch of true art you will never lay on canvas or on stone as long as you live.”¹

So far from its being true in practice that good taste is conformity with the taste of the crowd, it can in general be shown to be good only by being in advance of the taste of the crowd to begin with. The crowd may acknowledge its superiority when they see it in manifestation; but, in the development of the fine arts, they are led and not the leaders. And so we must look for some other standard than “the sufficient number,” or the vote of the majority. And Hume has given us another in the verdict of the few who, by constitution, practice, knowledge, freedom from prejudice, and the possession of good sense may be held to be thoroughly competent critics. “Strong sense,” he says, “united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character,” that of being true judges in the fine arts; “and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.”² And there can be no denying of the value in any case of thoroughly

¹ *The Two Paths*, lect. i.

² *Of the Standard of Taste*.

qualified men ; but how are we to judge of their qualifications except by their delicacy of taste, which is just what we want a standard for ? And how are we to get the "joint verdict" of those who may be supposed to be qualified ? And if their verdict is to be the standard of judgment for the common people, what is the standard of *their* verdict ? Or does it come to this, that the verdict of the few is to be blindly accepted by the many without question like the dogmas of their church by the mass of the Roman Catholics ? But the enjoyment of beauty is not the possession of a chosen few, but of men universally in proportion to their sensibility and culture ; and while the people at large may not be able always to give the reason of their decisions, they will never be limited in their likings and choice by the verdict merely of any set of men. The critics may give their verdict to-day, and the people may reverse it to-morrow. The canons of poetry in Pope's time will be of little avail when applied to the "Leaves of Grass" of Walt Whitman ; and the judgment of your qualified critics may be rent by some rising genius, like the ropes with which he was bound by Samson when it was said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson."

If your critics are to be taken as "true judges," then, of course, our taste to be true must in any particular instance when comparison is made be in accord with theirs. But that only turns our attention from their taste to the question whether their judgment is the true one. And that leaves us where we were when we started, and prepares the way for another standard of taste which has been given in what corresponds to Aristotle's "mean" in virtue. "Father Buffier," says Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, "has determined that the beauty of every object consists in

that form and colour which is most usual among things of that particular sort to which it belongs. Thus in the human form, the beauty of each feature lies in a certain middle, equally removed from a variety of other forms that are ugly. A beautiful nose, for example, is one that is neither very long, nor very short, neither very straight, nor very crooked, but a sort of middle among all those extremes, and less different from any one of them than all of them are from one another. It is the form which nature seems to have aimed at in them all, which, however, she deviates from in a variety of ways, and very seldom hits exactly, but to which all those deviations still bear a very strong resemblance," as the drawings after one pattern, as he puts it, will bear to one another. And "in the same manner, what is most beautiful bears the strongest characters of the general fabric of the species, and has the strongest resemblance to the greater part of the individuals with which it is classed."¹ The theory, which was adopted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is manifestly a most inadequate one. Even on its own showing, and from its own standpoint, what it gives as a test of the beautiful is not a test of all that is beautiful, but only of what is beautiful for the species. And even there it utterly fails, as being contrary to fact and experience. For what is distinctively beautiful is not what is usual, but rather what is extraordinary of its kind. And then what "middle" can we have as a standard for judging of the beauty of a sunset, or a landscape, or a moss-rose, or anything in fact? And how are we to decide as to the comparative beauties of different species, or of things of which only one of the kind has yet been discovered?

¹ Vol. ii., part 5, c. 1.

But while the theory affords no true standard of taste, and is almost ludicrously inadequate as an account of the beautiful, it yet has many elements of truth to recommend it to our consideration; and we confess we are more interested in these than in its failure to give us a standard. It recalls us from the various and fluctuating tastes of men, be they the majority or the minority, the much-despised many or the elect few, to the facts of nature by which the tastes and opinions of all, crowd and critics alike, are to be tested, and is thereby so much nearer than the theories of Jeffrey and Hume to a universal standard of judgment. It would do in the sphere of aesthetics what Copernicus did for astronomy, make the earth go round the sun and not the sun round the earth. Nature, according to it, is not to be made beautiful or the reverse by any thoughts or feelings of ours, but our thoughts and feelings are to be educated and tried by what nature gives us—they are to be brought to the test of fact. And every kind of thing it tells us, or tries to tell us, has a beauty of its own, and must be tried, if we want to get at the comparative merits of the individuals in it, by a standard of its own, and not by that of another. We would not try the merits of a pig by the colours of the spectrum or a musical chord, nor the beauties of a kingfisher by the form of the oak. And these are facts which, though obvious when stated, are steadily to be taken account of in our quest for a standard of taste. And there is more than that in the theory of Buffier and Reynolds which is of real and permanent value. It reminds us that there is a law and principle in things which cannot be overlooked with impunity; and that what an artist, and what every one who would

judge correctly of the products of art, must try to get at, is not merely the outward looks and details of a thing, but the heart of it, its regulative principle and spirit, its real characteristic features as an individual or the member of a species. No matter what our associations may be, we must seek to represent a thing as it is in its inner life and spirit if we would ever attain to any real excellence in art. We must not dictate to, but in meekness and lowliness, and with openness of heart, learn from nature, and listen to what she has to tell us and suggest to our spirit.

And so we come to another standard of taste in nature universally—nature in the whole extent and compass of it. For “nature,” says Emerson, “is a sea of forms radically alike and even unique. A leaf, a sunbeam, a landscape, the ocean, make an analogous impression on the mind. What is common to them all—that perfectness and harmony—is beauty. Therefore the standard of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms—the totality of nature; which the Italians expressed by defining beauty ‘il piu nell’ uno.’” And thus art, as he tells us, is but “nature passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art does nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works.”¹ And “the delight,” he says, “which a work of art affords, seems to arise from our recognizing in it the mind that formed nature, again in active operation.”² And the thoughts thus expressed are, so far as they go, it may be, at once poetically fair, and pre-eminently rational and stimulating to the artist. They are perfectly in accord, we think, with the best teaching of the best art instructors. But, so far as any universal standard of taste is con-

¹ *Nature*, c. 3.

² *Society and Solitude*, c. Art.

cerned, they obviously come short in this respect at least, that they afford no standard by which our preferences for, or aversions to, nature's beauties themselves can be tested. If nature in her totality is to be taken as our standard, we are left without a standard, it would seem, in our diverse opinions about nature's self in her varied aspects.— For she cannot well at once be the standard of taste and the object of the taste to be decided upon—unless we are to include in nature all that really exists. But even then we would be worse off than ever; for she would be at once the judge, the standard of judgment, the object about which the tastes would differ, the tastes to be decided upon, and the decision that was given, and the giving of it as well.

But perhaps we merely take advantage of the ambiguity of words when we speak in that way of the standard proposed by Emerson. If we take nature in her totality as all-inclusive and as one object, there of course can be no standard by which to judge of her, as there would be nothing with which to compare her; but then we do not think of nature in her abstract unity at all when we ask how we can judge of the beauty of any object in it, or what is the criterion by which our taste in any particular instance is to be determined. We are thinking of her, not as one and homogeneous, but as she appears in her separate individual objects. And there is nothing absurd, but only matter of everyday experience, when we decide by comparison which in a number of trees, or butterflies, or flowers is the most beautiful among them. We thus try natural products by what nature herself has given us, and so after all make nature our standard of judgment. There is a relativity in all our percep-

tions, and we judge of what is more beautiful by what is less so, and of what is less so by what is more so. And so with everything upon which we can exercise our judgment. And if it should be said, But that is to leave us just where we were at the outset of our inquiry ; for who is to decide which is the less or the more in any particular instance ? it might be said in reply, that the question takes it for granted that there is no unity of judgment or reason among men in their aesthetic perceptions and declarations, which is a point that has yet to be discussed, and which, in the light of the place and influence of Grecian art in history, is a most unreal and unlikely view of things.

But for ourselves we think that a universal standard of taste is neither possible nor desirable. To speak of *the* standard of taste as if there could be only one standard for all aesthetic judgments whatever is to use, as we have already indicated, practically meaningless and misleading language ; and to search for a standard for the species (which would give us as many standards as there are species in creation) would be as useless as hunting for vanity. For such a standard would necessarily exclude the difference in appearance, for instance, between the sexes where such difference exists, and the characteristic features of each individual—which is just what is necessary in portrait painting and delineation of character, and for all individuality of design. No *man in general* could possibly be taken as a criterion of the taste displayed by an artist in a portrait of *this or that woman*. The idea only needs to be thus stated to be seen in its naked absurdity. And take any outward standard that you might like to fix on, and the same differences which exist in the tastes to be tried will

be shown about the standard which it is supposed will settle all disputes; and so one standard would need another *ad infinitum*. That is to say, there can in reality be none; and it is not desirable either that we should have one. For, by the very existence of such a thing, taste itself would be destroyed in the arrest of all free exercise of the judgment and imagination, and art would be reduced to simple imitation—abolished, that is to say, as art, as fine art, altogether.

“But it belongs to the very nature of a judgment of taste that it cannot be so constrained.” Standards so called, models, examples, canons of criticism, rules, and the like may all be of the greatest service in instruction; and they may help, when properly used, to guide the taste and guard against flagrant errors. But the greatest service they can do is to stimulate the imagination and the heart to the free production of art for ourselves, and make us feel after something greater still. And if they do the other thing, and make us content with following rules and working mechanically, they become a curse to us by arresting effort and are the ruin, not only of the hope of progress in art, but of morality as well. To take an illustration from the very highest sphere of spiritual life, Christ may very properly be said to be our example. But it is not by doing *what* He did and *as* He did it in outward fashion that we can in any way worthily become like Him in our lives, or be truly His followers and disciples. The more closely we would imitate Him in detail in outward fashion, the more ridiculous and the more useless we might become, and the more likely to prove ourselves hypocrites and blasphemers. We become like Him in the measure in which we act in His spirit, and from like

motives and principles; and that leaves us, not in bondage to a rule, but free, infinitely free, in life and action. His life, while in one sense a standard or model, is not a constraint, but a stimulus to thought, and energy, and device in every desirable way. And so with all great masters in art and literature, and with all the good and brave of old. We can follow their example and become like them in our lives, not by always servilely copying them—though the copying may be necessary to youthful artists especially—but by freely following the bent of our genius, as they did theirs, in accordance with reason and common sense, and by expressing in the best possible way, as they also did, the truth which we may have reached by our perception into the life of things through the imagination and the heart.

It would be a grand mistake, however, to suppose that, because there cannot be a universal objective standard of taste, we may reasonably follow any whim or fleeting fancy, no matter what, in the sphere of art, and that taste in aesthetics can no more be rationally commended or condemned as unworthy than a flavour in the mouth or the pain of rheumatism. The law has been abolished as an outward rule, but in favour of an inward and regulative, spiritual principle which cannot be escaped under any pretence. There may be an infinite liberty in detail and the freest scope for the imagination in art, but the liberty and the imagination can be shown only in the realm of reason and of nature, which we may say is rational. The artist cannot dispense with the material of his art, nor with the thought which he is seeking to embody, nor with the laws of its embodiment, nor with historic accuracy in his delineations; and, to say

nothing of the nature of the thing about which he has to speak, the poet cannot rend at will and fling from about him as a useless thing the language, with its inherent rationality and weight of gathered experience through the ages, in which he is to express himself; nor can he disregard for a moment, if he would make himself understood, the construction of words into sentences in a rational way, and in accordance with the genius of the language he is using. His freedom may be as wide as the range of possibility, but of possibility within the range of his art; and the poetic art is not a lawless and irrational *arbitrium*, but with all its sentiment and feelings, and its national and local associations, an address of reason to reason in a rational way. And so, while there cannot be an outward standard of taste for all, there must be some universal principle or principles of judgment involved in all productions of art. Nature and the laws of nature and of human nature are behind and within them all and made known by them; and art is great in proportion as it gives utterance to these in their ideal excellence—in truth, and fulness, and intensity. The scratching of the mammoth by the troglodytes was ruled by the nature of the mammoth, and the sculpture-paintings of Egyptians and Assyrians by the thought of the nature of each object represented, and the characteristic differences of men and animals; and truth and fidelity to nature must be at the root and in the heart of all excellence of representation, whether in architecture, or sculpture, or music, or painting, or poetry, or rhetoric, or anything else which can properly be included in art. There is a nature in things which it is the vocation of the artist to represent; and, while he may be

limited in various ways by the medium of representation, by his own experience and relative conceptions of what it should be, and by his power of execution, and so forth, his work is necessarily judged of by us all in the light of our relative conceptions of the power and purity of his representation. Our conceptions of it may be varied in accordance with our experience and delicacy of perception, but they are relatively true; and one of the worst judgments that could be passed on it is, it is not natural.

Is nature, then, it may be asked, to be conceived of as higher than art? and is art to be only imitation? The latter question has been already answered with sufficient emphasis, and as clearly as need be, I think. Art must in every case be natural; but, in the higher departments of it, it is not only imitation, but inspiration and interpretation as well. Imitation merely would not be much in music; and as to whether nature is higher than art, it is one of those questions continually turning up in common life and philosophy which are full of snares for the unwary. What nature, and what art, is it that you speak of? and what do you mean by higher? For nature, without further qualification or definition, is a very vague term; and there is art and art, and art may be as natural as a blade of grass or a gleam of sunshine. I leave a picture gallery among the Highland hills, and am immediately, when over the threshold, brought face to face with the outward, material world in its most picturesque aspects and with some of its grandest scenery. I have not been particularly struck with anything in the gallery except with its studies of female nudity and the fleshly art; and, when I step out under the open sky and into a vision of the surrounding hills, with all their

graceful flowing lines and varied lights and shadows, in the quiet sunshine of a summer's day, I feel as if I had come from darkness into light, from ghastliness and frivolity into grandeur and glory, and I repeat, with a consciousness of the worthlessness comparatively of art,—the art just seen,—

“One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.”

But I stand before another great religious painting just fresh from the hands of a master, or I listen to the eloquence of an astronomer discoursing on the infinities of space and the sublimities of the universe as disclosed by the greatest telescopes, and I am awed and overpowered with the glory ; and, when I pass into the streets, I feel as if my visions in art had deprived the daylight even of its brightness, and that man could make something higher than anything of its kind that could be seen in nature—something superior far in effect and power ; and by these same visions I am made to realize, not that there is a great gulf fixed between nature and art, between the works of God and the works of man, but that a painting, or a poem, or a musical composition may be as natural a growth as a tree, or a flower, or a mountain, and as much of a work divine and product of the grace of God. In the one we have God through nature, and in the other through *human* nature ; and the latter, as the higher of the two natures, may be the better medium for the production of beauty of symbol and expression. An artist may never, by mere imitation, and to a close inspection of the material, vie with nature so-called

in delicacy of tinting and composition in vein and leaf ; but he may give us more of spirit, more of the idea of the thing, and in relations that are more suggestive. Take the same number of real leaves and spires of grass as you find represented in the frontispiece of Ruskin's *Two Paths*, and compare them with "The Grass of the Field," as therein given, and you will find that while, to a minute and microscopical examination of its parts, the artist's work must yield at once to nature's products, in general effect and suggestiveness the artist has the better of nature. But nature and art are not to be opposed, for both are natural and divine, and "each thing in its place is best."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS OF BEAUTY AND DIFFERENCES
IN TASTE.

WE have written at length on the development of taste, and we have asked and answered the question, Can there be a standard of taste? But we have not yet asked ourselves, what some perhaps might regard as the most important and most difficult query within the whole range of aesthetics, What is the origin of our ideas of beauty? Let our tastes be what they may, as diverse as the individuals exhibiting them or the same in all, highly developed and delicate, or the reverse, how has the idea of beauty ever come to be realized? How have any of us come to see anything as beautiful, or to think of anything as beautiful? What are the conditions of the existence of taste, or of the perception of beauty by man or by beast—if it be that beasts have any such perception?

To people not read in philosophy such questions will appear, I have no doubt, either stupid or trifling. "How else," they will ask, "could we have any idea of anything being beautiful but by seeing it, or hearing it? We get our knowledge of things as beautiful as we get our knowledge of anything else, by experience. We see such and such things, and we hear such and such things, and they are beautiful or the reverse, just as they are large or small, round or square, heavy

or light, relatively to our range of experience with them, and the materials for comparison, and the power of comparison which we can bring to bear upon them in judgment." And, for a ready, off-hand answer, and from a simple common-sense point of view, we do not know that anything could be better. It goes straight to the mark, that our senses are the only channels of communication with an external world, and that unless we had seen or heard such and such things we never would have come to have thought of them as beautiful or as anything else. If we had not seen a tree, or a flower, or a bird, or a butterfly, we would never have thought of them as existing; and if we had not seen them as beautiful, we would never have thought of them as beautiful; and so with everything. The universe exists in its beauty; and, in proportion to our sensibility, our culture, and the range of our knowledge, we perceive it as beautiful, and are set a-dreaming by its beauty and suggestiveness of things which the eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard, and the heart of man in its lower moods and stages has not yet conceived of. And what other account can be given, or is necessary, it might be asked, of the origin of our ideas of beauty, or of the existence and progress of art? Having seen things beautiful, we try to make such things, and with such additional perfections as may have been suggested to the imagination and the heart in their purest and most creative moods. And so with sounds; and hence statuary, and painting, and poetry, and music, and all that may be brought within the sphere of art. And is not that, in brief compass, the whole philosophy of the thing?

And if our inquiry had reference exclusively to the contents of our knowledge and to the process of our

experience *when it has once been started*, we do not know that much more could be said about it. But our question now is not how, on the assumption of an orderly beautiful world already in existence, and of faculties in accord therewith in perception, have our knowledge and our art come to be what they are? but, how have we come to see anything as beautiful to begin with? How has the world itself come to be thought of as beautiful at all? Given the existence of a beautiful world and the power of seeing it, and the gathering of knowledge about it of course may seem simple enough, but our question has relation to the possibility of seeing and to the process by which we have come to realize that there is any beauty in the world to be seen; and though the inquiry may probably seem to some an absurd and vain one—as absurd and vain as seeking by our reason to account for reason itself in the abstract—it has not been without its answer in the course of the history of philosophy; for be it known to you, my possibly unphilosophical readers, that wise men and philosophers have talked as if there was, strictly speaking, no such thing as a beautiful world to begin with, as we would seem to have been taught from our youth in Genesis, and as if beauty even now were all a mock appearance and mirage—a thing that may seem to be, but is not—a mere reflection of the feelings and the shadow of a dream, like Fichte's thought of his own existence. Thus Hume, in his essay on the "Standard of Taste," informs us that there is a "species of philosophy" which asserts that "beauty is no quality of things in themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them." And Dr. Reid, though in almost all his reasonings directly opposed to Hume, and

though it may seem at variance with the fundamental principles of his own philosophy, and inconsistent with some of his own averments on the subject, seems to lean to the same opinion. "I apprehend," he says, "that it is in the moral and intellectual perfections of mind, and in its active powers, that beauty originally dwells, and that from this, as the fountain, all the beauty which we perceive in the visible world is derived."¹ And, of course, Dr. Alison, and, notoriously, Lord Jeffrey, laboured in their essays on Taste to prove that beauty is not a quality of objects, as we might suppose, not a property of things extra-mental and material at all, nor in reality of anything which we see or hear, but only an emotion of the soul unconsciously projected on the canvas of nature through the power of habit and association. "That vast variety of objects to which we give the name of beautiful," says Jeffrey, "become entitled to that appellation merely because they all possess the power of recalling or reflecting those sensations of which they have been the accompaniments, or with which they have been associated in our imagination by any other more casual bond of connection." And Herbert Spencer's views are substantially the same as Alison's and Jeffrey's. "A good deal of the agreeable consciousness," he says, "which a fine colour excites, is traceable to associations established in experience. Throughout our lives reds, blues, purples, greens, etc., have been connected with flowers, sunny days, picturesque scenes, and the gratifications received along with impressions from them. Turning from natural to artificial spheres, it equally holds that on festive occasions pleasant excitements have been joined with perceptions of bright

¹ "On the Intellectual Powers," *Essay* viii., c. iv., of *Beauty*.

colours. The result is that the diffused discharge produced by a bright colour, which if general would cause vague pleasure, causes a stronger and more definite pleasure by taking such directions as to awaken these aggregates of agreeable recollections."¹ And he declares that he "wholly agrees" with the doctrine, "under an expanded form," "that our idea of beauty is a result of accumulated pleasurable experiences"²—he is wholly in agreement with Alison and Jeffrey, that is to say, if our associations are understood to be expanded from the pleasurable experiences of the individual to those of the race and of our pre-Adamite ancestors.

There, then, we have a philosophy of beauty complete—a philosophy not only of our perception of beauty, but of the existence of beauty itself, and an answer of a kind to the question with which we started—the question, viz., How have we come to see anything as beautiful and to think of anything as beautiful, or, what is the origin of our ideas of beauty? They originate, according to the association theory, not by impressions from a world in existence as beautiful prior to experience, but by an accumulation of pleasurable experiences, personal and inherited, which, like a many-coloured glass between our eyes and the objects looked at through it, clothe the world with a beauty which in reality does not belong to it, but is all illusory and fictitious. It is we who impart their beauty to the things we see. They are not beautiful in themselves, that is to say, but only because they have been associated with some agreeable feeling or emotion, or with a long succession of them; or when

¹ *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii. Aesthetic Sentiments.

² Essay on "Gracefulness." First Series.

they are the natural signs of such feelings said to be in the or when they bear some analogy or fanciful inherent to things with which these emotions or feelings by necessarily connected, and are calculated, to add Alison's characteristic thought, to awaken the imagination and excite us to some pleasing train of thought or luscious reverie.

Now it is easy to see some of the objections which might at once arise in any thoughtful mind to such a theory. The idea of there having been no beauty in the world till it was transfigured and glorified in appearance by the advent, say, of man with his lower nervous and organic pleasures, would at once strike one as absurd. Was the sky not blue, it might be asked, and the grass not green before man's existence? Were the laws of the refraction and the reflection of light not the same as they are now from the creation of the world? And were there no bright sunsets, and no changing hues in the woods in the changing seasons, and no finely sculptured and polished shells, and no gorgeous feathers in wing or tail, before they came to be associated with the pleasures of our race? And are we to believe, can we for an instant think, it might be pleasantly asked in ridicule of the whole position, that, when we admire any piece of statuary, or a musical composition, or a painting, or a poem, and compliment the author on his performance, and accord him praise, we mistake our own identity for his, and are simply grandly egotistic, forgetting that *we* make the beauty which we see? "If Mr. Alison and Lord Jeffrèy mean to say," said B. R. Haydon, "that a lover never feels his heart quiver till he has given way to a long train of associations, and then says, 'Bless my soul! this must be a beauty, I will most un-

colours. The ~~is~~ 'love'; then, I maintain, neither the
 deduced by a ~~other~~ of these distinguished and amiable
 vague have any sensibility to beauty, or were in love
 all their lives." ¹

But the theory cannot be so cavalierly disposed of as most of its critics would seem to imagine, nor is it to be thought of as out of date in the history of philosophy. Neither is it out of date now, nor is it likely to be out of date in premillennial days. In some form or other it arises in the popular mind as the most likely account of beauty as soon as the difficulties of the subject become apparent; and no merely sensational or materialistic philosophy can ever dispense with it. It may be variously disguised by the language—physiological or other—in which it is set forth; but it will consistently appear, like utilitarianism or hedonism in ethics, in every materialist system. And, in the general confusion of its representations, and till the confusion can be shown to exist, there is truth enough in it to sustain it against the attacks of its adversaries, and to make it look plausible in the main. When, therefore, we proceed, in the sequel of this chapter, to examine somewhat closely, the arguments by which the associationists have attempted to prove that beauty can be no inherent quality of things; and, when, having shown, as we think we shall be able to show, the utter inadequacy of their polemic, we proceed further to show, in the following chapter, what modicum of truth they have got in the confusion of their representations, and the failure of their theory, as we conceive it to be, on its constructive side, we shall be working, as we believe, in the interests of truth and of a sound philosophy. And that we may have a full

¹ *Lectures on Painting and Design*, vol. ii., p. 267.

appreciation of the difficulties that are said to be in the way of the belief that beauty is really an inherent quality of things and not a something superinduced by association, let us trace, in brief compass, but strongly, the course of their argument against that common idea, and let us do it in our own way while using their illustrations.

Things are beautiful, you say, and seeing there are facts which are calculated to shake our faith a little in what would at first sight appear to be the evidence of the senses, and the veracity of men; for common sense, let us doubtfully fall in, and veers with light and knowledge, as if a straight stick in the water, and it is bent: we sit in a train in rapid motion, and seemingly trees and posts fly past us, when really it is we who are flying: we shut our eyes, putting our hands upon them heavily, and direct them as if to look straight forward, and we see all sorts of brilliant colours moving and melting into each other, vanishing and reappearing: and, to give no other instance, we say that the fire is hot, though strictly speaking it is the fire that makes us hot. Now may there not be some such illusion in the case of beauty? If we see things straight as crooked, and things stationary as in motion, what reason have we for trusting our senses when we see things as beautiful? May they not in themselves be the reverse of what they appear to us to be? If we can make colours for ourselves by putting our hands upon our eyes, why may we not clothe the world with them? If we naturally and unconsciously transfer what can belong to a sentient being only—the sensation of heat—to the fire, and say that it is hot, may we not in the same way un-

consciously transfer our feelings to the outer world, and say of things that *they* are beautiful? There is a perfect analogy between the two cases, is there not? And if there is a general illusion in the one case, why may there not be in the other? And that there is such an illusion in the case of beauty may be plausibly maintained, and has been plausibly maintained,

First, from the variety of objects to which beauty is ascribed. If beauty be a quality of objects, how, it may be asked, could things so various and unlike as a statue and a thought, a cloud and an eye, a hill and a dog, be possessed of it? There is but little resemblance, it would seem, between a trunk of a tree and a lyric poem, a gnarled stick and a perfect circle, a waving line and a theory of morals, a tumble-down wall o'er-grown with ivy and the life of a hero, a spire of grass and a foaming cataract; yet they may all be called beautiful. Have they anything in common which entitles them to the epithet? "How shall mind assert its supremacy so as to establish an order between things belonging to such different domains as a pillar, a song, a colour, and a smile? Under what mysterious art of mastery shall we comprehend the thought that stirs a man's heart, the swelling wave that breaks at his feet, and the minster bell that travels over the green meadow and wreathes itself with invisible pulsations through the curiously convolved chambers of the ear?"¹ Things tall and things short; things crooked and things straight; things material and things mental; colours, and sounds, and silence,—things the most contrary and unlike are said to be beautiful. Now what is it that makes them so? Must there not be some one quality in

¹ Professor Blackie on "Beauty."

them all which entitles them to the name? And if there is, what is it? But who is to decide the question? For every taste differs from almost every other. And hence,

In the second place, it may be argued from the want of agreement among men as to what is beautiful, that beauty is no property of things. There is no disagreement, it is said, among those in whose organization there is no defect, as to the colours and forms of things. Where one sees green, another sees green; and what one calls crooked, another calls crooked. It is the same with tastes, etc. We are all agreed that sugar is sweet, and that doctors' drugs in general are bitter; that ice is cold and fire hot; and that sounds are loud or low. If beauty, then, was a property of things and perceived by the senses, we should expect that there would be the same agreement among men as to its presence or absence. But what do we find to be the case? Where one may see it constantly and be thrilled by it, another may perceive nothing which he can at all admire, and a good deal perhaps which he does not like. A man of poetic temperament may gaze in rapture on a landscape, in which another, who is of a less imaginative turn of mind, and is bent on business and money-making, may see nothing that is fitted to arouse one pleasurable emotion. One may like a form and pattern which another would not look at. The uneducated speak of things as beautiful which cause loathing to the cultured, and *vice versa*. To one there is no beauty like that of a mathematical demonstration; another sees nothing that is attractive in it. The lover, it is said, beholds a charm and beauty in the loved one, which no other mortal eye can see; and each one thinks his place the best. In

short, what one regards as beautiful, another may think detestable.

But not only is there a difference of tastes in different individuals, there is a difference of tastes, often contradictory in the same individual at different times and in different places. Our taste may vary with our years and change with education. What pleased us in our childhood has now no charm for us; and what we hated then, may now be perfectly delightful. The poem or picture which pleased us in our youth may appear to us as hideous or silly in our age. When we are sad, all nature feeds our gloom; when cheered with fortune and blessed with health, the world is steeped in brighter light, and all things seem to dance with gladness. And then there is the puzzling fact of an ever-changing taste in fashion. How varying and contradictory our judgments here! What to-day seems graceful and becoming, the very perfection of beauty in dress, may in a few short months be laughed at as absurd. Our fathers look—how funny!

And as with individuals, so is it with nations. How different are the ideals of taste and beauty among the different tribes and nations of the world! There seems nothing in common between them but confusion and contradiction. The pebele, or lip-ring, for instance, which is esteemed an ornament by the females of the African Manganja tribe, gives them an inexpressibly repulsive look to a European. But “if there was anything absolutely or intrinsically beautiful in any of the forms thus distinguished, it is inconceivable that men should differ so outrageously in their conceptions of it. If beauty was a real and independent quality, it seems impossible

that it should be distinctly and clearly felt by one set of persons, where another set, altogether as sensitive, could see nothing but its opposite. And if it were actually and inseparably attached to certain forms, colours, or proportions, it must appear utterly inexplicable that it should be felt and perceived, in the most opposite forms and proportions, in objects of the same description."

But a third, and it may seem a still graver, objection may be urged against the belief that things are beautiful in themselves, and that is, that forms and colours, without reference to any change or difference in ourselves, are beautiful only in certain places and positions, and sounds only at certain times and in certain surroundings. Blue, it may be said, for example, is beautiful in the sky, but not on the nose of a woman; green in vegetation, but not in the eye. Rose-colour seems more beautiful than that of mahogany; but were we to paint our doors or furniture with it, they would not look nice. Pink does well enough in a rose or the cheek of a girl; but paint your grates with that colour, and it would be thought you had little taste. So again, the colours and forms which are becoming to women are not so to men; and the features of childhood or youth would not be regarded with pleasure in one who had reached maturity. It is the same with sounds as with forms and colours. The songs which we love in gladness are painful in our grief; the stirring peals of martial music do not suit a funeral. The hooting of the owl at dusk or midnight among ancient ruins, or by the side of a gloomy wood, is strikingly sublime. The same sound at noon, in a cheerful,

open landscape, is trifling or ridiculous. The falling of a drop of water is insignificant enough in itself; yet when heard at intervals in silent, subterraneous vaults, or large cathedrals, it may be called sublime. And, not to multiply illustrations which every one's memory may supply him with, the noise of a cart may be mistaken for thunder; and, so long as the delusion is prolonged, the sound may be felt to be impressive—sublime; but the moment the mistake is perceived, the sublime will become the ridiculous. But if sounds, and forms, and colours were of themselves and intrinsically beautiful, they would be beautiful surely wherever we saw or heard them, and without respect to place, or time, or circumstances.

From such considerations it has been concluded that "beauty is not an inherent property or quality of objects at all, but the result of the accidental relations in which they may stand to our experience of pleasures or emotions, and does not depend upon any particular configuration of parts, proportions, or colours in external things, nor upon the unity, coherence, or simplicity of intellectual creations; but merely upon the associations which in the case of every individual may enable these inherent and otherwise indifferent qualities to suggest or recall to the mind emotions of a pleasurable or interesting description. It follows, therefore, that no object is beautiful in itself, or could appear so, antecedent to our experience of direct pleasures or emotions; and that as an infinite variety of objects may thus reflect interesting ideas, so all of them may acquire the title of beautiful, although utterly diverse and disparate in their nature, and possessing nothing in common but this accidental power of reminding us

of other emotions." And as a logical consequence of this theory, it must be added that "all tastes are equally just and true"; that "no taste is either bad or false; and the only difference worthy of being attended to is that between a great deal and a very little."

Such, in brief compass and stated as strongly as we could put them, are the arguments used by Alison and Jeffrey against the idea that beauty is an inherent quality of things; and they may seem at first sight plausible, and perhaps to some irrefragable. But with all the undoubted truth they contain as to matters of fact, one cannot but feel that they are wholly unsatisfactory and superficial, and not a little dangerous to boot. For the same principles of reasoning rigorously carried out strike at the root of all morality and religion, and land us in universal scepticism. For if there is no inherent beauty in things themselves, then there is no beauty or deformity in virtue or vice as such, no loveliness in a holy character,—good and evil are the products of feeling or emotion merely, the creatures simply of association. And if there is no beauty in natural objects because men do not agree with themselves and with one another as to what is beautiful, then, for the same reason, there is no truth, and consequently no God of truth—not even "an Eternal Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Nay, I cannot be sure of my own existence if I follow out these principles. For I do not seem to myself to be more certain that I have the emotion of the beautiful, than that I perceive a beauty *in things around me*; and if the one be an illusion, why may not the other? Or, to turn the theory we have

stated more pointedly against itself, if the beauty of nature is all an illusion, a mere appearance and fiction of the mind, why may not the thought that beauty is an illusion be itself a delusion? And so on such principles I am led to the extreme of sceptical conclusions. I am sure of nothing; no, not even of that; for the statement contains an affirmation of a certainty, viz., that I am sure. I may henceforth say with the great philosopher whose name has been already mentioned, "I know nothing and am nothing. Images—pictures only are, pictures which wander by, without anything existing past which they wander, without corresponding reality which they might represent, without significance and without aim. I myself am one of these images, or rather a confused image of these images. All reality is transformed into a strange dream, without a world of which the dream might be, or a mind that might dream it. Contemplation is a dream; thought, the source of all existence and of all I fancied reality, of my own existence, my own capacities, is a dream of that dream."¹

But a theory which logically leads to such a conclusion must be fundamentally wrong somewhere, however difficult it may be to detect where the fallacy lies. And the truth of the matter seems to be, that while the maintainers of the theory in question are right as to many of the facts they adduce, they are wrong as to the inference they draw from those facts. Take the first general argument, the infinite variety and contrariety of objects to which beauty is ascribed. It is simply a statement of fact which involves the universal presence and prevalence of beauty—not the contrary. To infer that *none* of them are beautiful from the fact

¹ Fichte's *Destination of Man*, c. 9.

that *all* are said to be so, is a curious way of reasoning. And, if it be said, 'But there must be something which is common to all these various objects which entitles them to the epithet,' I may answer, Yes, they are all alike in this at least, that they are beautiful; but what exactly beauty is, or wherein it consists, I may not be able to tell you, any more than I can tell you what power is, or space is, or time is. No one can tell us what these are; that is, give an exact definition of them which will include them in their every phase and nothing more; yet, in spite of the difficulties which the Kantian philosophy, or that of Herbert Spencer, might beget as to their objectivity, we are sure that they have an existence independently of us as individuals—that we neither make them nor unmake them. And why may it not be so with beauty? If I should say that because power is said to reside in an infinite variety of objects, objects so unlike as a thought and a piece of wood, a smile and a cask of powder, it must be a creation simply of the human mind and not an inherent property of material objects, I would not be at all likely to command the assent of intelligent men who were not posing as sceptics or pedants hypercritical. And the only legitimate inference that can be drawn from the fact that an infinite variety and contrariety of objects are called beautiful, would seem to be, not that beauty is not a quality of things, but that like life and power, of which it is a phase, it may be hovering and impalpable. It may be real though we may not be able to analyze it into its component elements, or say what it is that makes things beautiful—though we may not be able to seize it and enclose it in a formula, or lay down rules and principles by which we may be able in every case infallibly to determine its presence.

It is suggestive always, incomprehensible, and runs with us into the illimitable and infinite.

But further. So far from regarding the fact that such an immense variety of objects go under the name of beautiful as an argument in favour of the Alison-Jeffrey theory of beauty, I think it is one of the very strongest arguments that could be produced against it. For who can say, or pretend to believe, that even a tithe of the objects which are called beautiful, and which he judges to be beautiful, has ever been associated in his mind, by even the most "casual bond of connection," with previous agreeable sensations or emotions? Why, we go abroad into the world, and we come upon a thousand things with which we could not possibly have had any previous agreeable experience, and we pronounce them beautiful *at once*, and without being conscious of any resemblance or analogy in the things to objects which we have seen or felt before, or having any agreeable train of thought awakened in us by them, and we think them all the more beautiful *because of their novelty*. We may not know what they are nor anything about them, and if we discover in them any resemblance to anything with which we are acquainted, that may be an *additional* trait to their beauty and *enhance* their value to us, but it is not the reason of our instantaneous decision respecting them. If only a small number of things with which we were familiar were beautiful, it might reasonably be maintained that our ideas of beauty could be explained on the principle of association alone; but since an infinite number, the greater part of which we pronounce at first sight to be beautiful, pass under that title, it is impossible that such a principle can account for all the facts to be explained—

unless, indeed, our instinctive perception of beauty be an inherited tendency, like Huggin's famous English mastiff's antipathy to butchers and butchers' shops—the result of an agreeable association with the phenomenon now called beautiful in the experience of our progenitors.

But even that supposition, the supposition, viz., of a transmitted experience, which is dwelt upon by scientific men nowadays *usque ad nauseam*, only carries the difficulty a step or two farther back, and obliges us to ask, by what conceivable or inexplicable process could the sensation or emotion of the agreeable become transformed into the perception of the beautiful in our ancestors or in any one else? We derive pleasure from the perception of beauty, it is true; but we should not confound the subsequent or coexistent pleasurable emotion with the original and causative perception. And, if we start with the agreeable alone, we can never make a single step towards the perception of the beautiful. For if we have had only an agreeable experience in connection with an object, all that the laws of association will lead us to, or can be supposed by themselves to lead us to, in the future, would seem to be *the reproduction of our agreeable impressions in the form of ideas of the agreeable*, but not of the beautiful—that is another matter. We must have the beautiful to begin with, or we never can get it from association merely—there can be no association where that condition is awanting; the materials for the associating principle to operate upon are not supposed to be given. And that Jeffrey himself substantially admits. The nature of beauty, he says, “is no more explained, nor is less absurdity substantially committed, by saying that things are beautiful because they are agreeable,

than if we were to give the same explanation of the sweetness of sugar; for no one, we suppose, will dispute, that though it be very true that sugar is agreeable because it is sweet, it would be manifestly preposterous to say that it was sweet because it was agreeable." Yet he subsequently says, and his whole theory—all against which we are contending—is founded on the idea "that every feeling which it is agreeable to experience, to recall, or to witness, may become the source of beauty in external objects, when it is so connected with them as that their appearance reminds us of that feeling." But how does that agree with his previous admission and assertion "that though the agreeableness of such objects depends plainly enough upon their beauty, it by no means follows, but quite the contrary, that their beauty depends upon their agreeableness"? The agreeableness of such objects, it is admitted, depends upon their beauty—beauty, that is, is first in thought and the natural order of things; but if beauty be thus the *cause*, it cannot well at the same time be the effect of our agreeable sensations or emotions. And so it would seem to be granted that beauty, in some cases at least, is a property of outward things appealing to our sympathies through a constitution harmonized with nature.

So far, then, as any argument can be drawn from the infinite variety of objects to which beauty is ascribed, it seems to point in an altogether opposite direction from that in which it has been supposed to point. Instead of supporting, it seems to bear directly against, the association theory. And the longer we consider it, the more are we convinced that it is so. For beauty is no fixed and definite quantity in nature's garner; it moves and shifts and reappears perpetually, and never

at two moments of our lives, perhaps, do we see the same things exactly to admire. All is in a flux ; perpetual motion within permanent law is the order of nature everywhere. And as to individual forms and phases of it, beauty is evanescent and fleeting as a shadow—never the same, except in memory it may be, where, as Keats has sung, “a thing of beauty” may be “a joy for ever.” But where perpetual flux is, there can be no association—the conditions are awanting. Yet we are bathed in beauty as in an ether ; it is all-pervading and omnipresent almost as the spirit of the Eternal. It may make for itself new forms, and show itself in an infinitude of ways, but always it is there in Nature—in tree or fruit or flower, on mountain and in valley, in wreathing clouds and rippling stream, in gathering storm or glistening dew, in twinkling star and falling snow and setting sun, in coral reef and murmuring shell and roaring ocean. It looks o’er ruined walls and peeps through copse and fern ; it streams in the light and steals through dusk and shadow ; it waves among the leaves and grass, and haunts the depths of earth and sea ; and traverse the globe from pole to pole, it will encompass your path, your lying down, and your rising up. It may not, it does not, show itself equally to all everywhere and always ; but always some faint traces of it may be seen, to gladden the eye and cheer the heart of pilgrims on life’s busy highway.

It is time, however, that we were turning to the second general form of argument with which we have to deal. Not only is there the contrariety in things called beautiful which we have been discussing, but there is no agreement among men, it is said, as to what is beautiful ; and hence it is inferred that beauty

is not a quality of outward things at all, but only an affection of the mind projected on things perceived. And that is an argument which may be used, as we have said, to undermine our ideas of truth and virtue and religion as well as those of beauty. It has been used for that purpose before and ever since Protagoras condensed it in the dogma that "man is the measure of the universe"; and now Spencer and his school are employing it under the convenient phrase, the Relativity of Knowledge, to prove that all our knowledge is merely phenomenal—phenomenal of the Unknown, and that if there be a God we can never know anything about him, He must remain for ever the "Infinite Unknowable." But let us think of it now in relation to our subject, for we have nothing to do with it in the meantime in its wider applications to morality and religion.

There is no agreement in taste, you say. Well, supposing that your statement was strictly and to the utmost true, it would not prove that beauty was not inherent in things; for we might still legitimately hold that it appeared in manifold degrees and ways, and that each mind seized that which by constitution, education, or association, it was fitted to perceive. That there is an endless variety in tastes is just another side of the thought that there is a countless diversity of objects that pass under the name of beautiful; and it may be turned in the same way into a proof of the substantial reality of beauty instead of an argument to the contrary, and of the mutual adaptation of nature to mind and mind to nature. Suppose (and we need not suppose it, for we may find examples of it in actual life almost any day, but suppose) that ten or twenty persons on hearing a discourse, or on reading a book,

all bring away a different impression of its several parts, and that each differed from all the rest as to the part he liked and approved of, would it not be even a stronger testimony to the real, substantial beauty of the composition as a whole that ten or twenty individuals, who were each of a different mental constitution and calibre and differently informed, perceived a beauty in ten or twenty different parts, than that they should all agree in declaring that they saw only one and the same beauty in it? If while those of a poetic temperament were in raptures with its imagery, its diction, and the easy flow and rhythm of its composition, the logical mind enjoyed its reasoning and pronounced it faultless, and the bold, the sensitive, the gentle, and the loving all found much in it which pleased their taste and called forth their admiration, we would naturally say, would we not? it must surely be an altogether excellent piece of composition when all shades of disposition and grades of understanding find in it their element. The man of keen and logical mind with no emotion might think its tender passages more or less ridiculous or silly, and the emotional and imaginative might see nothing attractive in its close, consecutive reasoning; but the very excellence, the real perfection and beauty of the work as a whole, would just consist in this, that it suited all—all temperaments and capacities and forms of mental action. Well, to turn to no lesser object, we have surely such a book in nature. There the subtle and the weird, the tender and the melancholy, the gentle and the awful blend harmoniously together, and are governed by laws as strict in their sequence as the most rigorously logical mind could wish; and every one, from the child which has hardly learned to dis-

tinguish self from things to the astronomer who weighs the spheres and predicts the return of comets, may find in this broad round earth beneath us, or in the heavens above us, something which appeals to his sense of order and beauty and sublimity; and though each may see a different beauty, and in strangely contrasted objects, the fact that all see something beautiful there would seem to point, we humbly submit, to the infinite wealth of nature rather than to the illusiveness of her fair appearances.

We are conscious of a seeming paradox, however, in the argument we have just adduced, and we may at once by anticipation answer an objection. We have said, not dogmatically, but by way of question, that we may have a stronger testimony to the substantial beauty of an object in the fact that each of twenty different persons perceives a different beauty in it than that they should all agree in declaring that they saw the same; and hence we might be charged with maintaining that the testimony of one is stronger evidence to the existence of a fact than that of twenty. But it is to be observed that though each of the twenty perceives a different beauty, they are all supposed to see it *in the same object* though in different parts, and that thus we still have the testimony of twenty, and not of one only, to the fact that the object is beautiful. But further, and more especially, it is to be noted that the twenty are all supposed to be *differently constituted and trained*; and it is only by not observing and allowing for that condition that our statement is not seen to be as clearly true as that the denial of it would be absurd. For we hold it as incontrovertible, and as practically acknowledged by all, that persons of a certain bodily framework and mental constitution and

development stand in the same position relatively to certain aspects of beauty as the blind to colours, the deaf to sounds, or those without an ear to music, or as persons who see when they are in different relations and positions to an object of sight. To demand that all should see the same beauty in all things as a proof of the reality of beauty when all are not possessed in an equal degree of the same faculties and training, and do not stand, so to speak, at the same angles of observation, is like demanding that a thing should be before it exists, or like insisting that the blind should give their testimony to the existence of an object which can be perceived by sight alone before we who see should believe in its existence.

It was long ago observed by Addison that what we call a difference *in taste* is not so much that as a difference *in what is perceived* from the degree of attention given, or the difference in the development of the sensibility or imaginative power. "We find one transported with a passage," he says, "which another runs over with coldness and indifference; or finding the representation extremely natural, where another can perceive nothing of likeness or conformity. This different taste must proceed either from the perfection of the imagination in one more than another, or from the different ideas that several readers affix to the same words. For, to have a true relish, and form a right judgment of a description, a man should be born with a good imagination, and must have well weighed the force and energy that lie in the several words of a language, so as to be able to distinguish which are the most significant and expressive of their proper ideas, and what additional strength and beauty they are capable of receiving from conjunction with others.

The fancy must be warm, to retain the print of those images it hath received from outward objects ; and the judgment discerning, to know what expressions are most proper to clothe and adorn them to the best advantage. A man who is deficient in either of these respects, though he may receive the general notion of a description, can never see distinctly all its particular beauties ; as a person with a weak sight may have the confused prospect of a place that lies before him, without entering into its several parts, or discerning the variety of colours in their full glory and perfection."¹

To the same effect Burke observes, in his ingenious Discourse on Taste prefixed to his "Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful," that it is from "*a difference in knowledge* that what we commonly, though with no great exactness, call a difference in taste proceeds. A man to whom sculpture is new, sees a barber's block, or some ordinary piece of statuary ; he is immediately struck and pleased with its likeness, because he sees something like a human figure ; and entirely taken up with its likeness, he does not at all attend to its defects. . . . Some time after, we suppose that this novice lights upon a more artistic work of the same nature ; he now begins to look with contempt on what he admired at first ; not that he admired it even then for its unlikeness to a man, but for that general though inaccurate resemblance which it bore to the human figure. What he admired in different times in these so different figures *is strictly the same* ; and though his knowledge is improved, his taste is not altered."

The quotations seem to add the weight of authority

¹ "On the Pleasures of the Imagination," Paper VI., No. 416 of *Spectator*.

to the idea expressed in the preceding paragraph, that the seemingly great variety in tastes and diversity of deliverances respecting what is beautiful, is an argument not so much for the illusiveness of beauty as for the infinite fulness of nature in degrees of beauty and her adaptation to all the varying wants and capacities of man. The beauty is there in nature—in things external, but it needs an eye to see it and certain conditions of mind and heart to catch it in its subtle and ever-shifting evolutions. The practised ear can detect a jarring note in music which passes unperceived by others, and there is no disputing that it was produced though it was not heard by some; the blind can tell the colours of a cloth by touch, when we, whose fingers have not been used for such a purpose, can perceive no difference; and so, as we unfold through growth, experience, and education, we may see a deeper and different kind of beauty, it may be, in art, in nature, and in human life, and as a consequence of our own advancement and progress in humanity, things which once appeared so pleasing may look comparatively dull and unattractive. But still it is to be noted that we are not thus passing from one illusion to another, but from one degree of perfection in perceptive power to another. Indeed, it might be argued that if beauty were a quality with which we clothed an object from our agreeable experience in connection with it, and not a quality in things themselves, we could not thus connect our ideas of it with different objects in a progressive scale, but that our sense of the beauty of things must intensify according to the length of our acquaintance with them; and that as our past agreeable experience with an object must remain an absolute and eternal fact, that object must so far continue to appear to us as beautiful for ever.

But as this is a point to which we may return in the sequel, we need not dwell upon it now.

So far we have argued on the supposition of an absolute and irreconcilable diversity of opinion as to what is beautiful ; but we may now stop for a moment in our career and ask the simple, yet very important question, is the disagreement after all so great as some would seem to represent ? And the answer, we think, must in all fairness be, that on broad and general grounds there is as perfect a unanimity of thought and sentiment about beauty, as there is in the tastes of the palate and the perception of colours, and that difference emerges only in questions of detail comparatively. There are things which every one with reason probably would at once allow to be beautiful. There may be differences of choice or preference with reference to form, or size, or shade of colour, but what savage, or child, or educated man or woman of any age or nation, who is not colour-blind, would not be pleased with a full-blown, perfect rose ? Take any individual rose, and you might find some who would say that they had seen one more beautiful ; but every one would agree with every other probably in recognizing some beauty in every flower of the species—a beauty in it, I say, when compared with mud. And it is the same more or less with all other flowers and forms in nature. No matter what your age, or nationality, or associations, you will see a glory in some sunsets and a grandeur in the starry sky—a glory and grandeur as compared with the beauty of a sandstone chip for instance. One may see more splendour and beauty in them than another, but all would agree in classifying them under the name of beautiful. There is a universal agreement too, for

instance, as to the comparative beauty of certain species of animals or plants. Who would say that the crocodile was as pretty as the race-horse, or as graceful in its motions as the sailing swan? or that an unfledged sparrow was as pleasing to the eye as a brilliant cockatoo or a humming bird in perfect plumage? Who would prefer a stunted sloe-bush to the shading lime as an ornament for his lawn, or deck his garden with the dandelion and the gowan, rather than the cactus and the rose? Who would have more aesthetic joy in the black and smoky stones of an old cathedral than in the "saints and prophets blazoned on the panes"? Or take human life and character. There are deeds and lines of conduct which command the admiration of all who hear of them and are capable of judging. There are musicians and orators who take all audiences as by storm, and gain a world-wide fame. There are poets and painters who by common consent of ages take the lead in literature and art. Do not facts like these show agreement as to what is beautiful? And how can we account for them, if there is no intrinsic beauty in things—if it be wholly a web of our own experience and sensibility?

A good deal has been made of the different ideas of beauty among different nations; but the difference is all on the surface, and is not so great as at first sight it might seem. There may be a difference which can be seen by all in customs and dress and general habits of life; but the difference does not always indicate a difference in taste. It may be and often is the result in a large degree of the necessities of temperature and climate, and so forth. For people are influenced in their choice of dress and the formation of habits, etc.,

not only by ideas of beauty, but by feelings of comfort and convenience, and a thousand other things as well. We see that it is so in the case of men of different nationalities assuming the costume and habits of their adopted country. When Europeans go to India, they may don the native garb more or less, not as a matter of taste, but of necessity. And that there is no great difference in our ideas of beauty is seen in this, that when foreigners do assume the native dress of any nation, they frequently display even greater taste in details of choice and arrangement than the natives, the natives themselves being judges. And as to the delight with which we "catch the strains of our native melodies in strange or in distant lands," it may arise from the comparatively greater actual beauty of our national airs, or, which is more frequently the case perhaps, from the fact that they recall the past and bring by suggestion "the light of other days around us." They may possibly, in our judgment, not be half so beautiful as other strains, and yet we may like them better for the time because of what they bring to us in recollection. For there is a conservative element in us all, and whatever suggests or recalls old associations has a charm for us on occasion independently of our judgment of its comparative beauty or ugliness. But prejudices and preferences from old habits and associations are not to be confounded with aesthetic judgments. They are distinct in reality, and they ought to be regarded as different in our speculations.

But allowing that there are differences in national tastes from an original difference of temperament and constitution, and it may be of training and climate, they do not affect the truth of the belief that there is a beauty of things as we have seen; and the dif-

ference after all is but slight and superficial. For in works of art, in the disposition of colours in the making of ornaments for the house or person, there is a general consensus of opinion among all, and there has been from the first of times. The untutored Indian and the "heathen Chinese" make ornaments which vie in beauty with any that can be produced by the most ingenious and cultivated among the nations of Europe or America, and they are ready in turn to admire the trinkets and flowers and paintings which we admire and think so fair. They receive our poetry and classic authors according to their education and development in mental power, and we go back three thousand years and find ourselves at one with Homer and other ancient Greeks, with Moses and Miriam as they chant their song of deliverance from the foe, and with the Chinese and Egyptians in the constructing of their walls and pyramids. "Beautiful is the love of nature in the Philoctetes," says Emerson in that remarkable essay of his on History. "But in reading those fine apostrophes to sleep, to the stars, rocks, mountains and waves, I feel time passing away as an ebbing sea. I feel the eternity of man, the identity of his thought. The Greek had, it seems, the same fellow-beings as I. The sun and moon, water and fire, met his heart precisely as they meet mine. Then the vaunted distinction between Greek and English, between classic and romantic schools, seems superficial and pedantic. When a thought of Plato becomes a thought to me,—when a truth that fired the soul of Pindar fires mine, time is no more. When I feel that we two meet in a perception, that our two souls are tinged with the same hue, and do, as it were, run into one, why should I measure

degrees of latitude, why should I count Egyptian years."

If there is anything at all on which different tribes and nations substantially agree, it may indeed be said to be the beauty of things perceived. The theology of Homer may be out of date, but the *Iliad* retains its power. The science of Lucretius may in many things now be ludicrous, but his *De Rerum Natura* has its admirers as of old. The politics of the Pharaohs may not be in accord with the ideas of to-day, but "the jewellers of Paris could not have produced more exquisite workmanship" than is shown in the ornaments found in the coffin of Queen Aahhotep, wife of King Rames;¹ and while the customs of the cave-men may have been barbarous and cruel, their art has not lost its charm nor beauty for us of this nineteenth century. Like the cry of agony or the shout of victory, the beauty of art is of universal significance. "Great is the God in it, and He groweth not old." Talk as you will, then, about the differences in taste among the nations, it is no more than is necessary to set off their general unanimity of sentiment, and to illustrate the principle, as applied to the nations as a whole, which some lay down as the most general expression and fundamental law of beauty, and which lies at the root of being, unity in variety.

As to the third objection which has been urged against the idea of beauty being an inherent quality of things, a very few words in answer may suffice. If colours were beautiful in themselves, it is said they would be beautiful wherever they were seen, and no matter how arranged. And the simple answer is, You are right; and so they are. But distinguish:

¹ Renouf's *Hibbert Lectures*, 1879, lect. ii.

there may be an incongruity in their relations which is not beautiful. Sky-blue is just as beautiful on the nose of a woman, or anywhere else you may like to put it, as in the vault of heaven, *when we regard the colour alone and without relation to its position*. And so it is with the forms of things. A beautiful face is beautiful no matter who possesses it. The rosy, chubby cheeks of childhood would be just as beautiful in a man of forty as a boy of five years old when regarded by themselves; but there would be an incongruity *in the relation* between age or manhood and such features which would not be pleasing to our "home-bred fancies" and associations. It would not be natural. And now observe. In that there are such relations, and such perceptions of relations, which we cannot alter or reverse at will, and in the reversal of which would be the reversal of nature's order, we have the very strongest evidence that beauty is not, and cannot be, wholly the result of association, but that it must be inherent in the very nature of things. The very fact that there are relations of things which we cannot alter without a sense of incongruity, or, in other words, that there is a place for all things which is *natural*, involves as a fundamental idea that there is an order and law of nature *given us in experience*, but not made by it, which we must observe before we can make things beautiful in art; and therefore that there are laws of beauty antecedent to and presupposed in all association, and on which experience, or association itself, must rest as a basis. And to go farther and ask, "If the smile, which now enchants us, as the expression of innocence and affection, were the sign attached by nature to guilt and malignity; if the blush which expresses delicacy, and the glance that

speaks intelligence, vivacity, and softness, had always been found united with brutal passion or idiot moodiness; is it not certain, that the whole of their beauty would be extinguished, and that our emotions from the sight of them would be the reverse of what they now are"? is really nothing more, though it sounds very profound and puzzling, than to ask whether, if the order of things were changed, it would not be different from what it is. Of course, if it were different from what it is, it would not be the same; but that is nothing to the point, and the question might very pertinently be asked, whether such a change as is supposed is at all consistent with reason or within the bounds of possibility.

Then as to the statement that sounds affect us differently according to the circumstances in which they are heard, and as we conceive of them, there is no question as to the fact. But let us here again distinguish. The falling of a drop of water is just as insignificant when heard in a subterraneous vault or cave, *when considered abstractly and apart from its surroundings*, as when we hear it above ground in the light of day. And so with the scream of an eagle, the hooting of an owl, etc. They would be the same, and have the same effect upon us, whenever and wherever they could be heard, if they were considered abstractly and in themselves. But since the effect is different, the cause must be different. And the reason why we have at one time the emotion of the sublime on hearing a sound, and at another are not affected at all or remain indifferent on hearing the same sound, is, that in the two cases *the mental perception is different*. That is to say, it is not the slow dripping of water alone, nor the hooting of the owl alone, nor the scream

of the eagle alone, nor the mere sound as of thunder that awakes the emotion of the sublime, but *the whole mental perception*—the sound *and* the circumstances, the dripping of water *with* the silence and emptiness, the hooting *and* the darkness of night and the gloom of the adjacent wood, the scream of the eagle *with* the conception of freedom and height, the sound *with* the ideas of power and of danger as connected with thunder and the artillery of the skies. So then it is not the same sounds that affect us differently, but the different circumstances and our perception of them. No insignificant sound can ever by itself be otherwise than insignificant. It seems a truism, but yet we need to maintain as against some philosophers, that things are just what they are.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASSOCIATION THEORY—ITS TRUTH AND ITS INADEQUACY.

THE theory, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, has a great deal in combination with it that is true. The facts on which it is supposed to rest, or from which it is thought it has been deduced, are simply numberless ; and there is no denying that they are facts—"chiels that winna ding." But, when they are fairly looked at and thoughtfully considered, instead of supporting it, they seem, as we have shown, to be inconsistent with it ; and the confusion of thought involved in the theory from first to last is simply amazing. What Ruskin has said of it is hardly an exaggeration. "Frequent has been the support," he says, "and wide the acceptance of this supposition (that beauty is the result of the association with objects of agreeable or interesting ideas), and yet I suppose that no two consecutive sentences were ever written in defence of it, without involving either a contradiction or confusion of terms. . . . And if the arguments on the subject," he continues, "be fairly sifted from the mass of confused language with which they are always encumbered and placed in logical form they will be found invariably to involve one of these two syllogisms, either, association gives pleasure, and beauty gives pleasure, therefore association is beauty. Or the power of association is stronger than the power

of beauty, therefore the power of association is the power of beauty.”¹

Before proceeding, however, to point out the main sources of the confusion involved in the theory, it may be well to glance at the points on which we agree with it, and the truth it consciously or unconsciously sets forth and embraces. It has done well on insisting on the diversity of tastes that prevails, and on the greater apparent diversity ; for, if it does nothing else, that draws attention to the difficulty, and to the impossibility, as we have shown, of securing any outward standard of judgment. And the perception of the fact is necessary for freedom and progress in art in all its branches and in every sphere of life. It has done well in recognizing that we have pleasure in the beautiful. It has done well in emphasizing, as it has done, the truth that association may give a place, or an object, or a person, a very pleasing position in our memory, or may make it, on the contrary, very abhorrent in recollection—a truth that is of the utmost importance in education, and that may involve the most momentous consequences in the moral and spiritual life. It has done well in pointing out, and in dwelling upon, the analogies that subsist between the mental and the material worlds, and in giving to expression such an important place in aesthetics. It is, and must ever be, of the greatest importance that the place and the worth of expression should be recognized by all, and by artists and poets in particular. It has done well in arguing for a mental origin for beauty, and in insisting, by implication at least, that there is nothing beautiful apart from mind or spirit. For in that it is at one with all high idealistic speculations from Plato onwards, and

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., part iii., c. 4, § 7.

with the old belief in which we have all been brought up that the universe is the work and creation of God. It may have its own way of telling us that beauty is of mental origin, and its way may not be ours, nor Plato's, nor Hegel's, nor the Bible's; but at the root of it there is the thought that is common to us all, that the perception of beauty involves the idea of spirit and of a spiritual process in creation, and that there can be no thought of beauty where the thought of the perception of it is wanting. In the thought of beauty, or the perception of beauty (for it is all the same if the theory be true), being the result of pleasurable associations, there is inevitably and necessarily involved the thought, that there is no beauty without the implication of mind or spirit—that all beauty is mental, and a sign and proof, moreover, of pleasure—of joy; and, though the theory may be all astray in its process of deduction of beauty from association, we willingly grant to it these thoughts, and we have pleasure in showing it its implications, no beauty without mind, and no beauty without pleasure or joy somewhere and somehow in creation.

And yet there is something more in the theory which we are pleased to recognize as in general accord with, we might say, the universal sentiments of men, and with true philosophy and orthodox theology. It grants, and must inevitably grant (unless it denies that there is beauty in earth, and sky, and sea), that the *world* is expressive to us of thought and affection—whether of *our own* thought and affection, as it would say, or not, it matters not at present. If all beauty is the result of pleasurable associations, and if sky, and clouds, and fields, and mountains, and sea are beautiful, then they are expressive to us of pleasure, of joyous

thoughts, and affections, and feelings, and of all that we usually associate joyously with life and rationality. And that is what men have thought and felt more or less from the earliest dawn of poetry and history to the present moment; and out of that intuition, or sentiment, or whatever you may like to call it, by which men have recognized a spiritual element in creation, have sprung whatever is noblest in art and philosophy, all the cults of nations, and all religious and theological thought, with their accompaniments and consequences in science, and politics, and the general everyday life of society. And further still, the theory has a great element of truth in it when it tells us that it is the thought and sentiment of life and companionship in it that makes nature attractive, and that much of what is included under the general name of beauty owes, to some extent at least, its interest and aesthetic effect to the signs, or to the thought and sentiment, of human life and history. That it is the sentiment of life and companionship, human or divine, that makes nature attractive especially in her wilder aspects is what we have already seen in tracing the development of taste. In Hindu and Hebrew literature, in the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius in which there is an unconscious pantheistic element, and in all modern Christian literature, and very distinctly and very conspicuously in Wordsworth, as well as from our own experience, do we see that such is the case.¹

¹ Perhaps one of the best illustrations that could be given of the need of the sentiment of companionship for a true enjoyment of nature is to be found in Thoreau's *Walden*. In the chapter on "Solitude," he writes, "I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighbourhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my

And, in a subsequent chapter, we shall see how much of life and history are involved in the perception and the emotion of the picturesque and the sublime. Whether the perception and the emotion may be due to association in any sense of the word that is of any avail for the association theory is another question ; but that life and time, with all which time embraces, are involved in them we have the best of reasons for believing and shall maintain.

But when we have made these concessions to the theory under discussion, we have allowed to it only what it has in common with others and not what is distinctive of it as a theory ; and we shall now proceed to point out its weaknesses in the main and the confusion of thought from which it has sprung and in which it still finds its life and apparent strength and truth. And, for the sake of coherence and clearness, though at the risk of repetition, it may be well to fall back on some of the objections to it which we have already raised, or to which, as we have indicated, it is liable.

And the first of these objections, as we have seen, is the apparent absurdity it involves of there being no beauty in the world till the principle of association came into operation in the lower animals or in man—

recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain, while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighbourhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy, and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanest was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again."

no brilliance, nor fine gradation of colours in nature, no graceful lines, no symmetry of growth, nothing of what is now thought of as beautiful, for there was no pleasure in life to make it appear so. And the more we insist on the principle of heredity as necessary for the perception, and with the perception the production, of beauty, the more does the objection seem to force itself upon us and the more necessary does it seem to call attention to it. And we are quite willing to call even Darwin to our assistance here in opposition to the idea of beauty being a product altogether of sexual selection, or of any mere process of association in the individual or through all the generations of sentient creatures. We have already seen what is thought of the influence of sexual selection in the production of beauty by naturalists like Alfred Russel Wallace, and we shall have occasion again to call attention to its inadequacy to account for all the phenomena to be accounted for; but let us here quote a passage from the *Origin of Species* which seems to be decisive of the whole point in dispute in the present discussion. "Few objects," says Darwin, "are more beautiful than the minute silicious cases of the diatomaceae. Were these created that they might be examined and admired under the higher powers of the microscope?" Or were they the result of the pleasure and the choice of the diatomaceae themselves, we may ask in retort? No; for "the beauty in this latter case," we are told, "and in many others, is apparently wholly due to symmetry of growth," and if to symmetry of growth, then certainly, we should say, not to association with it. "Flowers rank among the most beautiful productions of nature," Darwin continues; "but they have

been rendered conspicuous in contrast with the green leaves, and in consequence at the same time beautiful, so that they may be easily observed by insects. . . . Hence" (But O woeful and absurd "hence," if the insects are supposed to have made the beauty which at the same time is said to have been previously made for them! But) "hence we may conclude that, if insects had not been developed on the face of the earth, our plants would not have been decked by beautiful flowers"—which yet were made conspicuous by contrast, and in consequence at the same time beautiful, so that they might be observed by insects—"but would have produced only such poor flowers as we see on our fir, oak, nut, and ash trees, on grasses, spinach, docks, and nettles, which are all fertilized through the agency of the winds,"¹ and which have all a relative beauty of their own independently of insect agency and pleasure. And any supposed-to-be selection of a mate for his beauty presupposes the existence of the beauties to be selected from.

Even granting then that the world has been made more beautiful by insect agency and sexual selection, there must have been beauty to begin with, and, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, there are many things most beautiful to which such agencies and processes can never be supposed to apply. And if it should be objected, 'But, in thus thinking of a world of beauty prior to the existence of pleasure in man or animals, you are reading your present experiences and ideas which have come by inheritance into the past, you are supposing the eye with its visions of beauty to be present before its existence, and so you hold as given what we want to be explained,' the retort is

¹ C. vi., p. 161, sixth edition.

easy—‘And so do you.’ The implication of seeing inevitably goes with us into the thought of anything as visible in the past or the future; and the thought of any plant, or insect, in however remote a past, implies its existence—in idea it may be, but still its existence as thought of—with all the distinctive features of its species. And it is obvious from your language that you too assume as data the very facts you pretend to account for and give us the origin of. For “throughout our lives,” you say, taking Herbert Spencer this time as your spokesman, “reds, blues, purples, greens, etc., have been connected with flowers and sunny days and picturesque scenes, and the gratifications received along with impressions from them,”¹ when flowers and sunny days and picturesque scenes already presuppose and contain the beauties which you are seeking to account for by association with them. And so do the reds and blues and purples and greens, which “have been connected with gratifications received along with impressions from them.” Things are presupposed to have been without association what at the same time they are said to have become by it, viz., beautiful.

And how could it be otherwise with any theory of association merely? To take the first step in advance from bare nothingness in beauty, from a state of mere blank negation in aesthetic perception, you would need to start with a theory, not of association, but of transmutation of agreeable experiences into the idea and perception of the beautiful. And that is exactly what is done—in words and fancy at least. At the root of the theory we are discussing lies the assumption that feelings of pleasure are somehow transformed by the alembic of life into ideas of beauty. And when we ask

¹ *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii., Aesthetic Sentiments.

what kind or class of feelings may thus give rise to beauty, Jeffrey answers us, "All sensations that are not absolutely indifferent and are at the same time either agreeable when experienced by ourselves or attractive when contemplated by others, may form the foundations of the emotions of sublimity or beauty." And though Alison is not so explicit on the point, as he seems to have never realized the difficulty, he says of colours that no one "is ever beautiful until we have acquired some pleasing association with it." And in a general way he observes that "wherever the emotions of sublimity or beauty are felt, I believe it will be found that some affection is uniformly excited by the presence of the object *before* the more complex emotion of beauty is felt; and that if no such affection is excited, no emotion or sublimity is produced."¹

Pleasure, then, it would seem, in some form or other, some agreeable sensation or experience, or some succession of agreeable sensations or experiences, is that out of which through association our ideas of beauty are supposed to come. Well, let us stick to that thought and let us consider for a moment some of the likely consequences of it and see to what it would lead us. In the first place, if it is strictly true and if we confine our thoughts to the Alison-Jeffrey form of the theory of each individual's pleasure giving rise to his perception of the beauty he sees, it would seem to follow that there can be no perception of beauty, and no love of anything, at first sight—none whatever till we have had some agreeable experiences in connection with the object or the person loved or admired. But is not the supposition opposed to the very first facts of experience?

¹ Essay v., c. ii., sect. ii., i.

A child is in raptures over its new doll or new dress as soon as it is seen, and from that moment its interest in it may begin to wane. We see a flower, or a picture, or a bird, or a face, or a landscape, with which we could not possibly have had any agreeable experience, and we pronounce it beautiful at once, and are all the more in admiration of it from its novelty. There is a pleasure in the perception of course, but from the beauty perceived—the beautiful itself being what is agreeable to us and what gives rise to pleasure, and not *vice versa*. And no theory of transmission by heredity can in the least modify the facts or get over the difficulty that *in objects of the same species and from the same root and stalk we at once perceive differing degrees of merit in loveliness*. In such a case there must be the same amount and degree of inherited experience in connection with each (for they are all of the same kind, and from the same root and stem); and yet our perceptions and judgments may differ in the case of each individual object, and in regard to different parts of the same object. In fact, the theory of the transmutation by heredity of what is agreeable into what is beautiful has no advantage in argument over the simple individualistic theory of Alison and Jeffrey. It only attempts to succeed by theory, that is, to get on without facts, where the other fails in facts; and they both stumble and fall over the same rock of offence. They rise or sink together, as we have already had, and shall again have, opportunity of showing; and, in truth, it is hardly worth while drawing a distinction between them. And so we may put as another stumbling-block in the way of any association theory, the fact of a simultaneousness in our perception of beauty with the sight of the object perceived, and our instantaneous varying judg-

ments of objects of the same kind or class whether perceived before or not.

But, again, if beauty were the result and product of agreeable sensations and emotions in connection with objects called beautiful, we would naturally expect that all objects whatever would be beautiful in proportion to the number and intensity of our agreeable associations with them. And Alison says that it is so—that the greater the number of associations we connect with an object “the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it.”¹ But in strange contrast and contradiction with the statement, and with just about as little truth, he says in another essay: “It is observable that even the most beautiful colours (or those which are the most expressive to us of the most pleasing associations) cease to appear beautiful whenever they are familiar. The blush of the rose, the blue of a serene sky, the green of the spring, are beautiful only when they are new or unfamiliar.”² Let us suppose, however, that, being consistent, he adhered to the first statement quoted, which is the logical result of his theory, and what then? We would be called upon to believe that objects with which we have had disagreeable experiences are ugly, and that those with which we have had agreeable experiences are beautiful, and that their beauty is intensified in proportion to our experiences of the pleasure they have afforded us. But are all pleasant companions beautiful or handsome, and is everyone whom we hate declared to be the reverse? Are things new and young less beautiful uniformly than those with which we have long been agreeably acquainted? Would it not be the very idiocy of theory to assert such a thing? Are our wives, and mothers,

¹ Essay i., c. i. section iii., 1.

² Essay ii., c. iii., section i.

and grandmothers when old and blind and wrinkled more beautiful in our eyes than young and blushing maidens in their teens? We may esteem them the more the longer we know them: the beauty of their *moral life* may more fully appear, but advancing age deprives them all to some extent of the facial beauty and the graceful form and feature which once they may have had.

It may be said, of course, that life is a very complex thing, and that in such cases as those we have mentioned one line or wave of agreeable experiences and associations may be crossed and effaced by a counteractive wave of disagreeable experiences, and that our perception of beauty in particular instances may thus be modified or destroyed. It may be said, for instance, that youth is in general a season of bounding life, of mirth and gaiety—the synonym of pleasure—while old age has become to us suggestive of all sorts of disagreeable things—weak and infirm health, irritability of temper, blindness, death, the grave; and that in our argument we should take account of those associations of things in general as well as of our individual and personal experiences in connection with any particular object. But it matters little whether we allow for such influences or not, for we have still to account for the fact of degrees of beauty in every stage of life and at every season of the year, and of ugliness in many from youth to manhood, no matter what our experiences with them may have been. And even if we allow for such counteractive influences as we have referred to in the case of human life, they cannot be supposed to come into operation in the case of other things to which our argument will still apply in all its force. There may be nothing to suggest decay in the flow of the river by

which we have played and gathered health from childhood's years, nor in the rise and swell of the grounds around our native home ; yet we do not find in general that they grow comparatively more lovely with the length of years and a happy life in connection with them. Almost every spot to which we can turn the eye may be preservative of thought, suggestive of all good remembrances ; and we may love to dwell in recollection on what happened there in other days, and be drawn to it in tenderness of heart so long as we live, and yet there may be no place almost that is in our eyes more barren and dreary and uninteresting externally—that has less of what is beautiful and picturesque in appearance. Our former pleasures and our plays may have made the place full of interest to us, attractive as every old home is, and we may want to die and be buried there for the sake of the days that have gone ; but these things do not invest it with a beauty which it does not really possess, nor make us see a loveliness in it externally which others cannot see. Strange places and new and strange scenes may appear more lovely far in outward aspect and may reveal to us only its barrenness by contrast, and we may acknowledge it freely and be the first to declare it, and yet our hearts may be irresistibly drawn to it and be bound to it by ties unseen and cords invisible for ever.

Now it is just here that the strangest imaginable confusion has been made, and still continues to be made, by those who write and speak about beauty and declare for the power of association in producing it—a confusion between what is pleasing and pathetic in recollection and the beauty which may be perceived externally by the eye or heard by the ear. We are told of the emotions with which we may recall or

revisit the scenes of our childhood's years ; of the fact that "simple melodies in music often appeal more forcibly to men's feelings than the most elaborately-concerted pieces, when we associate with them some recollection of times and places where we have heard them," and that in "all countries there are national melodies, strange and often monotonous to the ear of a foreigner, which to the native produce an effect unequalled almost by the highest inspiration of poetry";¹ and the inevitable lover, or the fond mother of a babe, will be trotted out as an illustration of the principle that emotion may give rise to a vision of beauty which is non-existent save in the mind of the observer. And we are left to the conclusion that in such instances at least "the power of association," as Ruskin has put it, "is the power of beauty." But, as we have just been saying, the place which is most deeply rooted in affection by association may be the very place which above all others is destitute of beauty to the eye, and the place last seen, and with which we have had no previous personal connection, may be judged to be the most beautiful of all. And while the rude, simple melodies of our earlier years may come to us, on foreign shores especially, with a power unknown to vastly finer music, we would not for all that prefer the Scottish bagpipes to a piano in our drawing-room as an instrument for constant use therein ; nor should the fact make us maintain the contradiction that the rude, simple melodies are more musical than the music which we judge to be vastly finer. The power of the simple melodies may be granted without granting a single jot of standing ground for the theory of a trans-

¹ Ferguson's *Principles of Beauty in Art*, more especially with reference to *Architecture*, Introduction, part ii., sec. i., p. 144.

mutation of agreeable emotions or feelings into perceptions of the beautiful. We might evidently prefer for the time to witness "Punch and Judy" with the children at a fair, to gazing on golden sunsets, or listening to siren songs; but that would not necessarily be because in our judgment the Punch and Judy scene was a finer aesthetic representation than sunset or song. A change may be lightsome—variety is pleasing: and our likings manifestly are not always of an aesthetic character. The feelings, the train of thought, the succession of images and emotions to which a scene or object or song may give rise, may afford unalloyed delight, and make us pleased with what awakens them; but there is no more reason for confounding the emotion with the scene or song than there is for confounding my thoughts about it with the house in which I am living, or my admiration for a friend with the friend which I admire.

But the lover—let us think of him; for much has been made of him as an illustration of an illusion of the senses, and one might be led to think, from the use to which he has been put in argument, that people are never in love with each other except for their personal beauty. But surely we may love one whom we know to be comparatively homely in appearance more than another who may be allowed to be the belle of the town; so that love is neither unconsciously to itself so blind as it is proverbially said to be, nor gifted with such power of vision, as others apparently would make out, that it can see as outward what has no reality but in the eye of the seer. Lovers' eyes, as a usual thing, have little advantage, we imagine, over those of others in the way of aesthetic discernment; and yet if they—the lovers—do see a beauty sometimes which others

cannot see, it is nothing more than we might expect, or than may be quite consistent with the reality of their visions. For when they are in each other's presence they have more of animation than at other times—they have more of spirit in their face. They have a "soul upon their countenances," as Dr. Reid has remarked, "which does not appear when they are absent from one another," and they are more attentive and more open to catch its meaning than disinterested parties are. And so they may not only seem to be, but may really be, more beautiful than at other times and to others. Who has not seen, even when he has been a disinterested party himself, how the eyes of friends have lighted up at meeting, and how their features have grown radiant, so that for the time they have become doubly attractive. And why then should not lovers' visions of each other's beauty be real? "Men say that that was sentiment; men say that that was fancy. I say that it was the very alphabet of everlasting truth. I say that it was one moment's gleam through the opaque and sin-contorted world, so that these persons saw how beautiful the soul was in its best feelings, in their best moods, when they were radiant. That was seeing the soul itself. Ah! that the curtain should have fallen so soon! Ah! that the literature should have been so little! Not only do men know that these things are beautiful, but if they grow in this knowledge—if they go on learning, the longer they live the longer and the more perfect becomes, not simply this appreciation of beauty, but their conviction that of all beautiful things there is nothing in this world like a beautiful soul and like beautiful experiences which proceed from it." ¹

¹ Henry Ward Beecher's *Sermon on Beauty*.

Though lovers and spouses and parents may naturally see a beauty in the object of their affection which others usually cannot see, they are at the same time as much alive in general to their defects in outward looks and manners as others—often more so, sensitively alive to them to a painful degree, though they may be tolerant towards them, and may seek to palliate and excuse them.

We may here remark that there is a confusion of ideas similar to what we have noted between the agreeable and the beautiful when people talk of utility and fitness, and the like, *giving* beauty to forms and modifying our judgments of them. If we allow a beauty to fitness and utility at all, we need not allow that they ever make beauty to appear where it is not. It is *in them* in such cases that beauty consists. There may be a beauty intellectual, perhaps, in an address being exactly suited to the purpose for which it was intended; but its fitness for the end intended does not reflect back upon the address, and by association beget a beauty in it which it had not from the first. The fitness of the address in relation to the audience and the object to be accomplished is itself the beauty. And so with other alleged cases of utility and fitness, and so forth, giving beauty to forms.

In view then of what we have said, it is not enough to say with Jeffrey that any kind of agreeable sensation “may form the foundation of the emotions of sublimity or beauty”; it should be shown what are the laws which regulate the transmutation of agreeable feelings into the perception and emotion of the beautiful, or what are the conditions required for the formation of ideas of beauty out of pleasant sensations or emotions; for, as a matter of fact, we see that agreeable sensa-

tions or associations do not always pass into ideas of beauty. What are those which do? Are there any? And if so, is there any invariable law of their transformation? And what is it? If we had answers to these questions we might be in a position to reply; but in the meantime we hold that, so far as the present evidence goes, there is no proof at all of the alleged transformation.

But we have not yet done with the association theory. "It has a great element of truth in it," we have said, "when it tells us that it is the thought and sentiment of life and companionship in it that makes nature attractive, and that much of what is included under the general name of beauty owes, to some extent at least, its interest and aesthetic effect to the signs, or the thought and sentiment, of human life and history." But, in its attempts to account for them, it confounds, and as a theory has an interest in confounding, the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime; and because the signs or the thought of human life and history are involved in what we vaguely and generally call the beautiful—which includes the picturesque and the sublime—it concludes that "it is man, and man alone, that we see in the beauties of the earth which he inhabits." "Take the case of a common English landscape," says Jeffrey, "green meadows with fat cattle, canals or navigable rivers, well fenced, well cultivated fields—neat, clean, scattered cottages—humble, antique church, with churchyard elms and crossing hedge-rows—all seen under bright skies and in good weather. There is much beauty, as every one will acknowledge, in such a scene. But in what does the beauty consist? Not certainly in the mere mixture of colours and forms; for colours more

pleasing and lines more graceful (according to any theory of grace that may be preferred), might be spread upon a board, or a painter's pallet, without engaging the eye to a second glance, or raising the least emotion in the mind ; but in the picture of human happiness that is presented to our imaginations and affections, in the visible and unequivocal signs of comfort and cheerful and peaceful enjoyment, and of that secure and successful industry that ensures its continuance, and of the piety by which it is exalted, and of the simplicity by which it is contrasted with the guilt and fever of a city life ; in the images of health and temperance and plenty which it exhibits to every eye, and in the glimpses which it affords to warmer imaginations of the primitive or fabulous times, when man was uncorrupted by luxury and ambition, and of those humble retreats in which we still delight to imagine that love and philosophy may find an unpolluted asylum. At all events, however, it is human feeling that excites our sympathy and forms the object of our emotions. It is man, and man alone, that we see in the beauties of the earth which he inhabits ; or if a more sensitive and extended sympathy connect us with the lower families of animated nature, and make us rejoice with the lambs that bleat on the uplands, or the cattle that ruminate in the valley, or even with the living plants that drink the bright sun and the balmy air—it is still the idea of enjoyment of feelings that animate the existence of sentient beings that calls forth all our emotions, and is the parent of all the beauty with which we proceed to invest the inanimate creation around us.

“Instead of this quiet and tame English landscape, let us now take a Welsh or a Highland scene, and see

whether its beauties will admit of being explained on the same principles. Here we shall have lofty mountains and rocky and lonely recesses—tufted woods hung over with precipices—lakes intersected with castled promontories—ample solitudes of unploughed and untrodden valleys—nameless and gigantic ruins, and mountain echoes repeating the scream of the eagle and the roar of the cataract. This too is beautiful; and to those who can interpret the language it speaks, far more beautiful than the prosperous scene with which we have contrasted it. Yet, lovely as it is, it is to the recollection of man and of human feelings that its beauty also is owing. The mere forms and colours that compose its visible appearance are no more capable of exciting any emotion in the mind than the forms and colours of a Turkey carpet. It is sympathy with the present or the past, or the imaginary inhabitants of such a region, that alone gives it either interest or beauty; and the delight of those who behold it will always be found to be in exact proportion to the force of their imaginations and the warmth of their social affections.” And then he goes on to unfold in detail what he conceives to be the contents of the thoughts and emotions raised by the scene.

Now that there is an element of truth in the explanation thus offered of the emotions excited by such scenes may be at once allowed. It accords very much, as may be seen from a subsequent chapter, with our own account of what is involved in the picturesque and the sublime. But its inadequacy, when taken as an explanation of our perception of the beautiful as a whole, may best be seen perhaps from the answer which Jeffrey himself has given to Alison’s character-

istic contention of a train of thought being necessary for every aesthetic perception. "We are far from denying," he says, "that in a mind of sensibility and reflecting habits, the contemplation of beautiful objects will be apt, especially in moments of leisure, and when the mind is vacant, to give rise to such trains of thought, and to such protracted meditations; but we cannot possibly admit that their existence is necessary to the perception of beauty, or that it is in this state of mind exclusively that the sense of beauty exists. The perception of beauty, on the contrary, we hold to be in most cases quite instantaneous, and altogether as immediate as the perception of the external qualities of the objects to which it is ascribed. Indeed, it seems only necessary to recollect that it is to a present material object that we actually ascribe and refer this beauty, and that the only thing to be explained is how this object comes to appear beautiful. In the long train of interesting meditations, however, to which Mr. Alison" (and we may now add Lord Jeffrey) "refers, in the delightful reveries in which he would make the sense of beauty consist, it is obvious that we must soon lose sight of the external object which gives the first impulse to our thoughts; and though we may afterwards reflect upon it with increased interest and gratitude as the parent of many charming images, it is impossible, we conceive, that the perception of its beauty can ever depend upon a long series of various and shifting emotions."

The truth, however, is that both Alison and Jeffrey were embarrassed, as many others have been from the same cause, and got themselves into endless confusion and contradictions in their philosophy of taste, by slumping all that gives rise to aesthetic emotion under the

vague and indefinite name of beauty, and refusing to recognize a reality in the distinction between the beautiful, and the picturesque, and the sublime. The passage which we have just quoted from Jeffrey in criticism of Alison is apparently in plain and palpable contradiction with his own account of the beauty (as he calls it) of the English and Highland landscapes; but there is an element of truth, which he did not see, in both positions. There is undoubtedly a beauty for the perception of which no train of thought is needed, and for which no association has been shown to account; but there is also a beauty (when we use the word as inclusive of what is picturesque and sublime) which involves, in our perception of it, if not a train of thought in the way in which Alison supposes, then in analysis the idea of an experience of life and of a vast and world-wide system of relations human and divine. And in this case we may, as we certainly do in the case of the sublime, lose sight altogether "of the external object which gives the first impulse to our thoughts"—the very point of the objection which seemed to Jeffrey most fatal to Alison's theory, but which, so far as the sublime is concerned, is only a statement of fact in experience. If Jeffrey, however, failed in distinctly perceiving what is involved in the picturesque and sublime as distinguished from the beautiful, and so failed in perceiving the truth (which yet in the explanation of his landscapes he unconsciously allowed) at the root and in the heart of Alison's "train of thought," Alison, on the other hand, and for the same reason (and Jeffrey also), failed to see that what is true of the picturesque and sublime may not all be true, is not as a matter of fact all true, of what is simply beautiful as distinguished from what is picturesque on

the one hand or sublime on the other. And so there is in their essays a general muddle and mixture of things that differ, and endless confusion in their statements and explanations of a theory which cannot stand, and does not stand, any close inspection.

And there is a similar confusion, but worse confounded, in the statements of Herbert Spencer. "If any one walking over Hampstead Heath," he says, "will note how strongly its picturesqueness is brought out by contrast with the surrounding cultivated fields and the masses of houses lying in the distance, and will further reflect that had this irregular gorse-covered surface extended on all sides to the horizon, it would have looked dreary and prosaic rather than pleasing, he will see that to the primitive man a country so clothed presented no beauty at all. To him it was merely a haunt of wild animals, and a ground out of which roots might be dug. What have become for us places of enjoyment—places for afternoon strolls and for gathering flowers—were his places for labour and food, probably arousing in his mind none but utilitarian associations,"¹—and probably arousing in the minds of many to-day who are very far removed from the primitive man none but utilitarian associations, we should say. But what a fine illustration of crude and undigested thought, and of quiet and absurd assumption! And how easy for some to derive the idea of the beautiful from the useful! As easy as to draw fine ribbons from a hat into which only mud has been put! The picturesqueness of Hampstead Heath is contrasted with the surrounding cultivated fields and the houses in the distance, when without them apparently the picturesque would not be there in existence; and it is identified with an

¹ *Essays*, First Series—Use of Beauty.

“irregular gorse-covered surface,” which, when taken by itself, nobody in his senses, and who knew what he was saying, would for a moment dream of calling picturesque any more than the primitive man, but only “dreary and prosaic.” And then, when a picturesque which is “dreary and prosaic rather than pleasing” has been imagined, the primitive man is arbitrarily supposed to differ from us by his seeing no beauty in it—which again would seem to imply that the picturesque should be held to be synonymous with the beautiful, inasmuch as the thought of the one is believed to vanish with the thought of the other. And that surely is confusing enough and grandly nonsensical. But it is not all of the curse of Babeldom in the passage—unless we are to suppose that, in the two sentences following that on which I have been commenting, we have only a statement of the truism that the appearance of the country and our customs have improved with civilization,—which would be irrelevant to the thought preceding. It is suggested apparently that our enjoyment, our pleasure, from larger leisure and much-changed habits and customs, has changed what was in itself only “dreary and prosaic” to the primitive man to what is pleasing and picturesque; and that utility has given rise by association to ideas of beauty as well as of use—has somehow transformed the one set of ideas into the other. But did the author forget that what he was supposing would be dreary and prosaic to the primitive man was different from that in which we now find delight, and have afternoon strolls, and gather flowers, and that there is nothing strange in the fact that the primitive man should not have seen what we see when there were not by supposition the same things to be seen—no cultivated

fields, no houses in the distance, no gay fluttering dresses, no sense of companionship? Put us into the "irregular gorse-covered" surface extending to the horizon, without green fields, or houses, or anything else to relieve it and ask us to gather our food from it, as is supposed to have been the case with the primitive man, and how much more interest would we, with all our susceptibility to beauty, take in it than he did? Is it not more than likely that it would be just as dreary and prosaic to us as to him, and a good deal more so? On the other hand, bring your primitive man, if you could find him, and put him into our varied landscapes, made picturesque by houses, and fields, and so on, and would he not be likely to see something of the simple and picturesque beauty which we now perceive, and which he could not see (because it was not there to be seen) in his "gorse-covered surface" alone? And if our ideas of beauty have arisen, as seems to be hinted, from use and pleasure, we might have expected that roots, and fruits, and vegetables, etc., which have been useful through the whole history of humanity would have been more beautiful than flowers and sunsets and the like, and that the pleasures of the palate would have been classed *par excellence* among the aesthetic emotions. But, instead of that, it is only by an abuse of language that we can speak of what is pleasant to the gustatory organs as beautiful at all, and the most useless things may be the most beautiful. It is characteristic, indeed, of our purely aesthetic pleasures, as Kant has declared, that they are entirely disinterested, and not the reverse. Our ornaments, of course, and as Spencer has shown, may in many cases be in imitation of things that were formerly useful. But we may have an antiquarian

interest in things as well as an aesthetic; and if our ornaments are beautiful, they are so not because they represent things formerly useful, but for some other reason altogether. And to see that such is the case, we have only to remember that if old swords and old armour *as used by Egyptians or Romans* were brought into our rooms, we would think them anything but ornaments. Their use is no more their beauty than it is their age or their weight.

It is still true, however, that our interest in the picturesque is in a large degree identical with our interest in humanity, and that the sublime involves the thought of life and history with all which these embrace; and the question for our consideration now is this, Is the admission of any avail for the association theory? I see, for instance, the sail of a ship at sea. It may be only a dirty piece of canvas; and if spread out on the beach, or hung up in a bleaching green, it would be an object of no interest to any ordinary spectator. We would see nothing in it there to admire. But as it appears on a ship coming round a cape in the distance in the quiet of a summer's day or evening, it may immediately have an aesthetic effect and change a scene comparatively uninteresting without it to picturesqueness. The sail may have been all that was wanted to make the scene picturesque. But why? A cloud of the same size and shape would not have the same effect if it were seen to be a cloud, nor would the sail if it were thought to be a cloud. It can only be, as it seems to us, because it is suggestive to us of human life and companionship—because it appeals in some way to the sentiment of brotherhood within us and awakens our sympathy with man—with life universally. If it is not “man, and man alone,” that

we see, as Jeffrey has said when speaking of his English landscape, it is the sail suggestive of man at a distance, in a world of waters, and within a "boundless reach of sky." It is not the sail by itself that is picturesque, but the sail with its connotations and correlations in infinity—the sail as indicative of life within certain relations and with a "*Je ne sais quoi*" in the background. And it is that "*Je ne sais quoi*," that element of infinity in correlation and suggestion, that is the most attractive feature in nature and in art—not that which is directly seen or said, but that which is dimly hinted and left for the imagination to conceive and the heart to feel in its higher moods. For, like St. Paul when caught up into paradise, we all, in our higher visions, see and hear things which it is impossible for us to utter or describe. And to state it thus is to put those higher visions beyond the productive power of any mere associative principle. There may be as much of association in them as you like, if by association is meant merely the linking of our experiences together in thought and memory, so that the one recalls or suggests the other by accident, or on reflection and in conversation ; but there is the world and there are our experiences of the world and our thoughts of the world to begin with, there are our sympathies, our emotions, our perceptions and judgments of things finite and infinite, and our reason, and anticipations which outrun experience and lay hold of things invisible and to come. There are not only the feelings of the agreeable and the useful involved, but all the world besides in its wide infinity of relations, and all that the spirit of man can think or dream of as past, or present, or to come. And you might as well speak of the agreeable producing the stars and the planets in their

spheres with the Power which sustains them, as seek, by association merely, to account for the picturesque and the sublime. For over the sublime, as on the temple of Isis, might be inscribed the words, "I am whatsoever is, whatsoever has been, whatsoever shall be ; and the veil which is over my face no mortal hand has ever raised."

CHAPTER X.

THE REALITY OF BEAUTY AND THE RELATIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

OUR examination of the association theory, both in its negative and constructive aspects, has left us with the conviction that, while it has much in connection with it that is true, it is utterly a failure as a theory, and that beauty may be regarded—not merely as an illusive something with which the mind from its stores of thought and feeling clothes a world in itself unattractive, but—as a really inherent quality of outward objects—as objective and as real as flowers, and trees, and birds, and the face of man, and the world itself in which we live. And that conviction may be strengthened—if it admits of it—as we proceed, and especially when we come to consider the universal prevalence of beauty—how it enters into the very make and constitution of the universe with its atoms and its laws material and spiritual, human and divine. And the conviction, as it seems to us, has an importance from a purely scientific and evolutionist point of view as well as from the point of view of a consistent metaphysics and a true philosophy; for any mere association theory leaves us, as it begins, with the fatal flaw of a dualism of mind and matter which cannot be overcome, and which bars the way to any true thought of the unity of the cosmos. For, in accordance with the theory, there is not only a difference between mind

and matter, such as there must always be in any true and intelligible system of thought, but there is no adaptation of the one to the other in the unity of reason to begin with, and only an outward and factitious bond of connection between them to end with—a bond like that between a floral wreath and the rotten trunk which it decorates and hides. Outward objects—matter, apparently inert and dead, and without any conceivable contrast in colour or grace in form, is there, out there, apart from mind, a naked formless *ὕλη*, waiting to be clothed with attributes of beauty by some more or less accidental association with agreeable feelings and emotions ; but, even when that has been done, it is still only *clothed* with them, and remains as before a something by itself as distinct from any real beauty given to it as our body from the garments which we wear. From a philosophical point of view the theory errs by making an irrational claim for mind as distinguished from matter, and by allowing too little to reason in which all things find their reconciliation. But there is another form of objection to the objectivity of beauty which we have now to consider, and which errs, on the other hand, by making an irrational claim for matter at the expense of the mind which contemplates it. Mind is not in this case, as in the former, richer in vision than the world is in reality, but impotent in its efforts to perceive what the world actually is ; and, through its impotence, must remain in ignorance of what things are in themselves—shut out for ever from all true knowledge of reality.

“Had we senses acute enough,” says Locke when speaking of colour as a quality of objects, “to discern the minute particles of bodies, and the real constitution on which their sensible qualities depend, I doubt not

but that they would produce quite different ideas in us ; and that which is now the yellow colour of gold would then disappear, and instead of it we should see an admirable texture of parts, of a certain size and figure. This microscopes plainly discover to us ; for what to our naked eyes produces a certain colour, is, by thus augmenting the acuteness of our senses, discovered to be quite a different thing ; and thus altering, as it were, the proportion of the bulk of the minute parts of a coloured object to our usual sight, produces different ideas from what it did before. Thus sand or pounded glass, which is opaque and white to the naked eye, is pellucid in a microscope ; and a hair seen in this way loses its former colour, and is, in a great measure, pellucid, with a mixture of some bright sparkling colours, such as appear from the refraction of diamonds and other pellucid bodies. Blood, to the naked eye, appears all red ; but by a good microscope, wherein its lesser parts appear, shows only some globules of red, swimming in a pellucid liquor, and how these red globules would appear, if glasses could be found that would yet magnify them a thousand or ten thousand times more, is uncertain.”¹

The argument evidently introduces us to a wider question than the existence simply of colour ; and we have now to consider the objections which may be raised, and which have been raised, to the existence of beauty as a real inherent quality of things external from what is called the Relativity of Knowledge. We have been dealing more or less, it is true, with objections from the relativity of knowledge in some of the preceding chapters ; but it has been only incidentally, and we now set the question of relativity

¹ *Essay on the Human Understanding*, b. ii., c. 23, sect. 11.

more definitely before us. And that we may know what we are about, let us first state definitely and at some length the objection which we have to meet.

Though we see objects, we do not all see them alike ; and, as the above quotation from Locke suggests, a very slight change in our organs of perception might change to us the appearance of the universe. Increase the perceptive power of the eye, and the colours, apparent magnitudes and distances of objects would all be changed, and things before unseen would come to view ; alter the structure of the ear, and the low, soft whisperings of the evening breeze might be loud as echoing thunder, or the roar of stormy ocean. Things beautiful now would on these conditions lose their loveliness to us, and the face of nature fade into another world. What delights us most might look as loathsome then as it is now enchanting. Let us stand, for instance, in front of a powerfully-magnifying convex mirror, and we may see a picture which perhaps will frighten and disgust us. The face which is deemed so smooth and pleasant will yield an image porous as a sponge and as destitute of charm. And so through all the earth. A change in us may change to us the universe. We need not seek far for facts to verify apparently the saying of the poet, that

“ We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live.”

And turning from ourselves to the constitution of the universe around us, we may find enough to suggest that things are not really what they seem to us to be ; and that the changes which we have supposed would take place by a change in our organism, can partly be cognized by the help of science as existing.

When we analyze our perceptions, it is said, we are forced to the conviction of their mere phenomenality. The appearances of things vary with the organic structure, the size, the age, the constitutional state, and so forth, of the different percipient subjects; and what seems to us as simple and as one is often found to be extremely complex and composed of numerous really separate elements.¹ The hum of insect life by murmuring summer brook seems one continuous sound, and yet it is caused by the countless beats of numerous rapid wings. The humming-bird and bee make music as they fly; but to one who was quick enough of ear to catch each separate stroke of wing, the music would disappear in a slow succession of sounds. And so with agreeable sounds in general. They may all be decomposed into periodic pulses or vibrations of greater or less rapidity;² and are not what they seem to be. And so with all that we can see or handle. Outward solid objects, as we call them, are composed of innumerable particles or atoms which are mutually exclusive, and so separable;³ and, consequently, could we see them as they are, we would see them as aggregates of loosely-lying particles, and not as single, solid objects, which they now seem to be. Could we move with lightning speed, they would no more impede our progress than the air we breathe. And so, could we see the plants and flowers and trees and other things which clothe the world with beauty,

¹ See Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i., part ii., c. i., et passim.

² See Tyn dall on *Sound*, Lecture ii.

³ "According to the best physical knowledge we possess, things are never actually contiguous; what we term contact between particles, only means that they are in the degree of proximity at which their mutual repulsions are in equilibrium with their attractions."—Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, c. 24.

in their elementary particles, or as they really are, all their present loveliness would disappear like the beauty of the once living human frame in the hands of an anatomist. And if things seem simple which are really complex, things complex seemingly, on the other hand, are sometimes very simple. If any dependence can be put on chemical analysis, all the vast variety of things around us are made up of a few simple elements variously proportioned and compounded. Might it not be said then, on the whole, that Beauty is rather the result of the imperfection of our faculties, and a *fault of vision*, like the imaginary forms we sometimes see in gloaming hours, or the ghosts of fable, than a reality apart from us and independent of us?

To complete the argument, however, which we thus are building up against ourselves, we must still advance a step. From the time of Heraclitus it has been in vogue with some to speak of *the Becoming* as the all in all of what is sensible. All is in a flux, he said; and the science of the day goes far to confirm the view. We can see the truth of it, in fact, by sense—in air and cloud and rolling sea; in the decay and growth of animal and of vegetable life; in the making and unmaking, the integration and disintegration of all material forms. And through these, without further help, we might easily pass to the thought of universal change. But science carries us beyond what sense unhelped can reach. As the world is moving swiftly, though we perceive it not; or as an attentive eye can always discern a process of continuous change in seemingly solid mountain clouds, so to the eye of Reason are all things in a state of ceaseless motion—flowing on from “form to form.” The very hills, once deemed eternal, are as shadows; and rocks of adamant are

moving, we are told, through all their mass, and not with the world merely. "Of absolute rest,¹ Nature gives us no evidence; all matter, as far as we can ascertain, is ever in movement, not merely in masses, as with the planetary spheres, but also molecularly, or throughout its most intimate structure; thus every alteration of temperature produces a molecular change throughout the whole substance, heated or cooled; slow chemical or electrical actions—actions of light or invisible radiant forces—are always at play, so that as a fact we cannot predicate of any portion of matter that it is absolutely at rest." All is moving, it is said. And in the idea of a universal flux or state of ceaseless motion, there would seem to be involved the thought that we can no more see exactly the same individual things in two successive moments than we can bathe repeatedly in the same water of a stream; and consequently that there must be delusion somewhere if we think of Beauty as a permanent quality of things without us. If all is in a flux, then nothing is as permanent; all is a Becoming.

And that we are not thus conjuring up out of the way objections, for the sake of trying to refute them, may be seen by a quotation. "There is, according to Plato," says Berkeley, "properly no knowledge, but only opinion concerning things sensible and perishing; not because they are naturally abstruse and involved in darkness, but because their nature and existence are uncertain, ever fleeting and changing. Or rather, because they do not, in strict truth, exist at all, being always generating or *in fieri*, that is in a perpetual flux, without anything stable or permanent in them to con-

¹ Grove's *Correlation of Physical Forces*, c. ii.

stitute an object of real science. The Pythagoreans and Platonics distinguish between τὸ γιγνόμενον and τὸ ὄν, that which ever generated and that which exists. Sensible things and corporeal forms are perpetually producing and perishing, appearing and disappearing, never resting in one state, but always in motion and change, and therefore, in effect, not one being but a succession of beings; while τὸ ὄν is understood to be somewhat of an abstract or spiritual nature and the proper object of intellectual knowledge. Therefore, as there can be no knowledge of things flowing and unstable, the opinion of Protagoras and Theaetetus, that sense was science, is absurd. And, indeed, nothing is more evident than that the apparent sizes and shapes for instance of things are in a constant flux, ever differing as they are viewed at different distances, or with glasses more or less accurate. As for those abstract magnitudes and figures, which certain Cartesians and other moderns suppose to be in things, that must be a vain supposition to whoever considers it is supported by no argument of reason and no experiment of sense."¹ Berkeley probably had no thought of beauty when he penned the passage, but the inference from his words as touching beauty is obvious, that if it exists at all it can be properly only a thing of thought or of the mind—entirely subjective.

Now that there is a beauty of thought, as well as of things without us—a beauty that is mental—we do not call in question, nor do we question, but rather hold that all beauty whatsoever may be ultimately traceable to mind as its source or fountainhead; but still we hold that there is a beauty of things without us, a beauty in things which we call material, and that

¹ *Siris*, section 304, also sections 336 and 349.

we can maintain, I think consistently, without affirming that our knowledge of matter or material qualities is anything but relative—relative as explained by the illustrations given. Let us see how it may be done, and, to take the subtlest form of the objection first, let us begin with the idea of the flux.

All is in a flux, you say. Well, supposing that it is, there is still by supposition the all which is in the flux, and it is known, moreover, it would seem, as not ourselves: for if we may bathe in a stream, as is allowed, the stream by implication is not us. Why then may not that which is not ourselves be beautiful? Because it is in a flux? But why may there not be a beauty in change—a grace in motion? Nay, why, for anything which we have as yet discovered, may not motion in some sort be the most fundamental, the essential thing in beauty—beauty itself? And if all is in a flux, *in fieri*, becoming, the flux by implication is an abiding principle of things—a permanent amid the fleeting. For if all is change or changing, then change itself abides, and, on that supposition, why may there not be a permanent, an unchanging, even an eternal beauty? For in saying all is in a flux, we assert a permanence, viz., flux. In affirming that all is change, we affirm the universality and permanence of change. And further we affirm implicitly that we the observers know it, and so that we are permanent too. And thus there is implied a double permanency, an outer and an inner, a flux which is constant and an ego which must observe it to assert the constancy, and so which must itself be constant—as permanent at least as the flow which it perceives. When we say that all things change, or move, or are in a flux, we express in reality only half a truth, and the affirmation requires to be

supplemented by its contradictory, which implicitly it contains, that something remains unchanged, eternally subsisting at the heart of things. In short, the Becoming does not exclude Being, but is itself the unity of Being and not-Being—a combination of the Eleatic contradictories.

We have hinted more than once that we do not want the beauty of a thing to be thought of as more permanent than the thing which is beautiful; and in that statement, though it seems a truism, there is a sufficient answer, we conceive, to those who would speak of the universal flux or movement as proving beauty illusive. It need not be more illusive than what they assert, viz., change. But that there is a permanence as well as motion in things admits of no dispute. Not only is there that abstract continuity or permanence of change which we have seen is involved in the very assumption that all things change, but there is a permanence too more or less in each individual form. No science can disprove it without proving at the same time its own absurdity or annihilation. Things change, it is true; but by the assertion the things which change *are*, and no amount of talk or abstract speculation can do away with such persistencies as stones and atoms, stars and human hearts. They may move through all their structure constantly, but still there are such things as streams and trees and pictures, birds and all the rest of it which passes under the name of beautiful. Motion does not disprove material reality, but implies and includes it. Things are to us what we see them to be—persistent, permanent though in motion.

But here a question may be raised to which we

must attend. In a former chapter we used as an argument against the association theory the argument which we have just been combating. "Beauty," we said, "is no fixed and definite quantity in nature's garner; it moves and shifts and reappears perpetually, and never at two moments of our lives, perhaps, do we see the same thing exactly to admire. All is in a flux; perpetual motion within permanent law is the order of nature everywhere. And as to individual forms and phases of it at least, beauty is evanescent and fleeting as a shadow—never the same perhaps, except in memory it may be, where, as Keats has sung, 'a thing of beauty' may be 'a joy for ever.' But where perpetual flux is, there can be no association—the conditions are wanting." And now it may be asked, Is not what you have said in defence of your own position equally good for those who hold to association as the ultimate explanation of our perception of beauty? If it serves your purpose, why should it not be good for them against the same objection? And the answer is, that our position is altogether different from theirs. We hold that the beauty of an object may be seen at once and without any previous association of the individual with it, and that therefore a single momentary glance may suffice for our perception of it. I may perceive at once a beauty in an object which I have never seen before, and without knowing anything about what class or kind it belongs to or where it came from. And there is no need, therefore, that it should last longer than that I can see it properly for my perception and judgment of its beauty. But, according to the association theory, there is need not only that it should last till I can

see it, but until the pleasure which it has in some way given me, or which I may have experienced in connection with it in the past, has been somehow transformed in my constitution and deluded me into the belief that I perceive what has actually no outward existence. Now, evidently the objection from the idea of universal change, swift as the change in many cases is and unrecurrent the object, is valid against such a theory and proves its futility, at least in a very large measure. And if it is valid as against the theory which makes beauty generally the product of pleasurable associations in the individual, it is equally valid, we conceive, as against the modification of that theory, which would make beauty the result of an accumulation of agreeable experiences inherited by the individual from a succession of generations.

But to return to our point. Things are to us what we see them to be, we have remarked. And that will be admitted perhaps. But they are not *in reality* what they are to us, it is said. Not in reality what they are to us! Well, that is strange enough if true. But if they are not, how are we to know it? Who could be so astoundingly, so miraculously clever as to discover that we do not know reality, or, which is the same thing, that we do not really know? For that is the amount of it. But if we do not really know, how are we to know that things are not in reality what they are to us? In asserting so much, we avow our discovery of their unreality, and that is what they are to us—unreal. And if admitting that, you still persist in saying that they are not in reality what they are to us, you assert their reality. For if they are to us unreal, and you assert that they are not what they are to us,

you affirm by implication their reality. Not necessarily, perhaps you say. They may be neither real nor unreal, but something between the two—appearance. And so may your statement, is the answer, and yourself along with it; and that is an end to reasoning.

But let us see. “They may be neither real nor unreal, but something between the two—appearance.” Well then, there is the reality of the appearance, and we have the knowledge of it as such; and so things are still in reality what they are to us. And on any reasonable supposition appearance implies reality as much as a shadow the object which casts it. For how can we reach a knowledge of mere appearance except through reality and in contrast with it? A thing is apparent as opposed to real only when contrasted with the real; and all knowledge of a thing involves the reality of its existence. We know, we really know, we know reality, or things are as we know them, are pretty much different ways of saying just the same thing. If we know a thing, we really know it, and we know it as a reality. Let us suppose, then, what the leading metaphysicians of the day as well as the vulgar and men of science take for granted, that we know, and that we know there is a world, a real, substantial world around us—let us take that for granted as a fact of which we are perfectly certain and about which there can be no reasonable doubt; and let us try by it the validity of the argument from the Relativity of Knowledge against the existence of beauty as an objective quality of things.

“A slight change in the shape and refractive power of the eye,” it is said, “would alter all our perceptions of the form and colour of objects, and, with them, the impressions of beauty and deformity derived from this

source. And if the senses themselves are confined to the apprehension of phenomena, how can the beauty of the objects of sense lay claim to a higher character?"¹ And so it is thought that the beauty which would thus disappear with the change in us must be merely phenomenal, or a kind of illusive appearance or projection of the mind's sensibility upon the things we look at. But it need not be, we say. It may be that if our eyes were changed so that we would see things as we now do through a microscope, we might no longer see them with the same colours as now. But the only legitimate inference from the fact, we think, would be, not that the colours which we once perceived no longer exist in the objects seen, but that we no longer see them as before. We can think of our having eyes to the vision of which this solid globe would be no more of an obstruction than the viewless air is to our seeing now, and of ourselves as so constituted that it might offer no perceptible or appreciable resistance to our locomotion; and then to us it would be as though it were not—we might not even be aware of its existence. But because we can indulge in such a supposition, and because we may believe with the Christian world generally that we are even now "compassed about" with a "cloud of witnesses" to whose movements what we call a solid wall may be no impediment, are we to believe that the world which we have supposed to be real and indubitably existing as a solid thing must be merely phenomenal—an illusive something or mere empty show without the substance, and that as changing to us with our change it must be a product simply of the percipient mind? No: we must not, we cannot; for we have already supposed, in

¹ Mansel's *Metaphysics*: Of the Real in the Philosophy of Taste.

agreement with metaphysicians of the highest repute, that the world is something about whose real, substantial external existence there can be no dispute. And if we must suppose of the world as a whole that it is something real and external, although with certain changes in ourselves it might disappear to us entirely, why should we think of colours, forms, and magnitudes so far as beautiful as merely phenomenal and unreal because with changes in our organs they would change to us? It is we who have changed, not they. A stone is no less a stone because with eyes in a certain state we could not perceive it; solidity is no less solidity because we can conceive of ourselves or of other beings as moving through what we now call solid objects without resistance; the world is no less a world because there may be beings who do not perceive it as we do; and a beautiful flower is no less a beautiful flower to those who can see it, although with certain changes in our constitution we might not see it as we do now. Things are to us what we perceive them to be; and if with a change in ourselves we see something else than we have been accustomed to see, really see it, there can be no further dispute about it. It is there as we see it—a reality, and its existence in no way disproves the truth of our former perceptions. Mistakes may be made; but that is no argument against the truth of our perceptions and of our judgments in general as to what is seen, but rather the reverse. A mistake implies true knowledge or correct belief somewhere.

As to microscopes and magnifying glasses of all descriptions, what more reason have we for trusting our senses when looking through a microscope, or when seeing ourselves reflected by a powerfully magni-

fyng mirror, than when looking at things directly with the naked eye? There might seem to be one more possibility of error and delusion introduced by the use of artificial instruments. But the common answer would seem to be, we have equal reason in both cases for trusting our senses; and, since we have, and since our senses give us conflicting testimony regarding one and the same object, they are proved to be untrustworthy witnesses as to the reality of things, and give us reason to think that the knowledge which we get by them is merely phenomenal. No; not at all, we would reply; decidedly not. Paradoxical though it may sound, our senses never give us conflicting testimony: never. They always give one verdict *under the same or similar conditions*, and there is no appeal as against them to a higher tribunal. They are supreme and infallible within their own sphere, and we must accept them as such. But let us mark what that sphere is. I plunge my hands, the one being hot and the other cold, into a basin of water say, and different sensations are felt in each; to the one we would say, the water feels hot comparatively, and to the other cold. But the truth is our sensations tell us nothing as to the temperature of the water *when measured by the thermometer*. All that they give is themselves; and they are both true under differing conditions. It may be said, of course, the water cannot be both hot and cold at the same time. But why not? Why not hotter than this and colder than that? Instead of saying it cannot be both hot and cold at the same time, it would be nearer the truth perhaps to say that it must *always be both*—hot and cold being simply relative and correlative terms. That the water is either hot or cold is a judgment which

we have learned to form from our sensations produced under regular conditions; it is not contained in the sensations as such; and when we bring our experience to bear in judgment upon effects produced by abnormal conditions or a new concurrence of causes, we may pass a wrong decision. But the mistake lies not in our feelings, which are always what they are felt to be, but in our judgment as to the relation of our sensations to their external cause. And so with regard to the eyesight and other senses. There can be no more untruth or conflicting testimony in our visions than in our feelings—our sensations of coldness or warmth. What a man sees he sees even though it should be in a dream or the ravings of insanity. We cannot question the truth of his vision, or deny that he sees what he sees; but we may question the truth of his judgment as to whether what he sees is a real and tangible solid object, or only an illusive appearance of one. The possibility of error lies not in the sight, but in our judgment as to the relation of what is seen to what is known as reality. And the truth or error of our judgment must be tried by the law of general experience produced under uniform or normal conditions. That is to say, we must trust to the reason and experience of men to correct what is wrong in particular instances; and that we can perceive what is shadow and illusion and mistake, is proof that somehow or other we know what is real. In every judgment as to what is phenomenal it is necessarily assumed that we know reality.

And now let us advance a step. It is supposed that because when we look through a powerfully magnifying glass at a face which is thought to be beautiful and see it as repulsively ugly, and because we can thence

imagine that with the necessary changes in ourselves our uniform experience of it would be as an ugly thing, that therefore our knowledge of beauty is wholly relative and the beauty itself as known to us phenomenal. As to the relativity of our knowledge, we make no question of it ; but as to the phenomenality merely of the beauty seen, we deny that the fact sustains the inference. For when I look through a magnifying glass at a tiny, pretty creature, and see a huge and ugly-looking monster, I only see an image very much enlarged as I know it to be, and not a tiny, pretty creature ; that is all. A magnifying glass may make a tiny creature look large, but it does not make it large ; it may give an ugly appearance to a pretty face, but it does not alter the real face which is pretty, nor change my belief in its beauty as seen. That which we judge to be ugly and repulsive is not the same thing, in fact, as that which we see to be beautiful. Our judgments have regard to different perceptions and objects of perception under different relations. And if the experiment proves anything, it proves that the glass, which is brought in to prove the phenomenality of our knowledge, makes things look different from what they really are ; or rather it proves, as we have suggested above, that there is a new possibility of error in our judgments as to things without us introduced by the glass. But it does not in the least shake our faith in the reality of things as we find them. We still believe that an inch of a cord is an inch, although the glass we look through may make it look like an ell ; we still believe that an object which is a mile away is a mile away, although we may see it through a telescope as near ; we still believe that a beautiful woman is a beautiful woman in spite of all

the artificial instruments in the world. It is not of the appearance given by any instrument that we are judging when we look directly upon anything and pronounce it beautiful ; it is of the thing itself, the real thing as we see it in naked vision ; and our judgment of the appearance of it given by an instrument does not alter or falsify our judgment of the reality or make us think of it as phenomenal as opposed to real. No ; not in the least. We naturally subject the appearance which the magnifying glass, or any other glass, gives to things to the test of daily experience as given through the exercise of the various senses under the control of reason, and decide accordingly. "Faith in the veracity of our faculties," says Martineau, "if it means anything, requires us to believe that *things are as they appear*—that is, appear to the mind in the last and highest resort ; and to deal with the fact that they 'only appear' as if it constituted an eternal exile from their reality is to attribute lunacy to universal reason."¹

But Locke's argument from the fact that objects may be seen with different colours when looked at through a microscope may be answered more particularly by a quotation from an article by Sir John F. W. Herschel. "There is no medium known," he says, "not even air, or the purest water, which allows all the coloured rays to pass through it with equal facility. Independent of the partial reflection which takes place at the surfaces of entry and emergence, a portion, greater or less according to the nature of the medium, is always stifled, or, as it is called in optical language, absorbed : and this absorptive action is exerted unequally on the differently refrangible rays ; so that

¹ *Essay on Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy.*

when a beam of white light is incident on any such medium, it will be found at its emergence deficient in some one or more of the elements of colour, and will therefore have a tint complementary to that of the absorbed portion. Supposing, as is most probable in itself, and agrees with the general tenor of the facts, that an equal percentage of the light of any specified colour which arrives at any depth within the medium is absorbed in traversing an equal additional thickness of it, the intensity of the coloured ray so circumstanced would diminish in geometrical, as the thickness traversed increases in arithmetical progression. The more absorbable any prismatic colour, then the more quickly will it become so much reduced in proportion to the rest as to exercise no perceptible colorific action on the eye. And thus it is found that in looking through different thicknesses of one and the same coloured glass or liquid, the tint does not merely become deeper and fuller, but changes its character.”¹

And as to the supposition that with the necessary changes in ourselves we might see things which we now judge to be beautiful as repulsively ugly, we have already replied to it in more ways than one, and we would only say of it now, it is simply a truism. If we were so made that we should see things as ugly, we would see them as ugly ; there can be no doubt of it. But that does not alter the fact, nor in any way invalidate the supposition, that what we see as beautiful is beautiful as we see it. And who does not see that, when we say that with certain changes in ourselves we would see things which we now deem to be beautiful as repulsively ugly, we are supposing that then we would either have a *false* vision of things, or would

¹ *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, lect. vi.

not see the same things as we now see at all? “Bring a sentient being, with eyes a little different, with fingers ten times harder than mine; and to him that thing which I call tree shall be yellow and soft, as truly as to me it is green and hard. Form his nervous structure in all points the *reverse* of mine, and this same tree shall not be combustible or heat-producing, but dissoluble and cold-producing, not high and convex, but deep and concave; shall simply have *all* properties exactly the reverse of those I attribute to it.”¹ Exactly so; for you are making that supposition. But is a tree as we know it any the less substantially a tree with height and convexity and hardness, etc., because we can suppose that it might be perceived as possessed of qualities the very reverse of these? And then there is a much more important and fundamental question following upon that. *Can* we indeed suppose a tree to be possessed of qualities the very reverse of those which we now perceive it to have? Can we think of a tree, that is, as having no height, no convexity, no hardness—none of the qualities which we now think of it as possessing, but “exactly the reverse”? Can we? Or would not that be to think of a tree as *no* tree? thus establishing an equation between something and nothing, as Cosmic philosophers would say, and squaring the circle. If we think of a tree at all, we must think of it as it has been given to us in experience; and to think of what *might have been* had we been constituted so and so does not help us in any way towards the settlement of the question either one way or the other as to the reality or phenomenality of the things we now perceive. And had we seventy-five senses instead of five we would be

¹ Carlyle's *Essay on Novalis*.

no nearer it than now. Nothing comes of such suppositions but confusion and evasion of the points at issue. They only serve to withdraw the mind from the consideration of the facts we have ; they add nothing to them in the way of demonstration or proof of a theory of knowledge. Here are certain things before us—a table, a chair, a tree, a garden—are they in reality as we know them and perceive them to be, or are they not? Have they a permanent existence out there at such a distance from us? That is the point ; and no amount of supposition as to what might, or might not, be on such and such *other* conditions can help us towards a correct judgment as to the existence of things as they are now.

But how are they now ? and where are they ? and what are they ? for that is just what we want to know, it will be said. Well, to speak of things intelligibly and as best we can, There, see, is a table at some distance from us. It is square ; it is solid ; it has a persistence independently of our individual perceptions, as ten or fifteen or a hundred of us may see it at once, or others can see it, as they tell us, when we are away or have turned our backs upon it. It is not, then, a modification of my consciousness, nor of your consciousness, nor of any other man's consciousness ; it is not a state of any individual man's mind, nor of any definite number of men's minds ; it has an existence and persistence which distinguishes it from a phantom or a picture of anything as seen in a dream, and no one can reason us into the belief that it is not there, out there, and apart from us, as we see it. It is what we would call a real and solid, outwardly existing material object. It may not be perceived by other orders of intelligence, if there are such, as by us ; but that does

not detract from its reality, nor deprive it in any way of the qualities which we perceive belong to it. And for anyone to speak of "that *fiction* in the region of common sense by which I judge this writing-table to be solid while, for aught I know to the contrary, the empty spaces between its particles may be as much greater than the particles as the inter-stellar spaces are greater than the stars,"¹ is like making the not very wise suggestion that solidity may not be solidity. No matter how far its particles may be apart, a solid thing is solid; and though we may think of it as composed of innumerable particles or atoms lying side by side, we still perceive it to be one and know it as one. It is still a table, a chair, a drop of water, or a something else. It is not a mere aggregate of separately existing atoms; it has unity as well as multiplicity. And for anything that has been established to the contrary, there *may be* continuity in its structure, as there seems to be. Why not? To say that there is not might seem to some like saying that we do not see things as we see them. And to say that science teaches us better, or that there is any other mode of arriving at the truth of things visible than by our senses, is either to set up our guesses against experience, or to convict our senses of mendacity by what has no relation to them. For there is no way of arriving at the existence of matter save through our senses; and if we know so little about the constitution of it as we are said to do,²

¹ Fiske's *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i., part i., c. 11.

² "Nothing is more preposterously unscientific than to assert (as is constantly done by the quasi-scientific writers of the present day) that with the utmost strides attempted by science, we should necessarily be sensibly nearer to a conception of the ultimate nature of matter. Only sheer ignorance could assert that there is any limit to the amount of information which human beings may in time acquire of the constitution of matter."—Tait's *Recent Advances in Physical Science*, lect. xii.

why may it not be continuous rather than atomic? And when we look through a glass and see an object, which seems continuous to the naked eye, as unconnected in its structure, why—as in the case of the nebulae, which are said to be “overlooked in very large telescopes, though obvious in much smaller ones” (*Nature*, vol. xix., pp. 221, 290)—may we not be *overlooking* something in it which we perceived by the naked eye? Are real things so few in this universe of ours that there must needs be illusions to give variety to them? Or may there not be more things in heaven and earth than have yet been dreamt of in philosophy? At all events, we do not need to await the discovery whether matter is atomic or not, or what are its constituent elements, or to think how this or that or the other thing might look through a microscope, or an opera-glass, or any other glass, to know that some of its forms and combinations are beautiful. And if they are beautiful as we see them (and how can we think of them as we do not see them?), they *are* beautiful; we know them to be beautiful, and that is an end of it.

But can we know “things in themselves,” then? it will be asked. Well, we do not know till we know what is meant by things-in-themselves. If by the phrase is meant things out of all relation to our knowing, perceptive faculties, and which cannot be supposed to be known by us under any conditions, then we would say, if there be such things, they are by the very supposition of their existence out of the reach of knowledge, and so we can have nothing to do with them. But if by things-in-themselves be meant positively existing and persistent realities in the shape of men and women, stones and chairs and tables, trees

and houses and the like, I would say, Yes ; we know a great many such things, of course. We may not know all that is to be known about them ; we may be very ignorant of them, indeed, in some respects ; but still we know them, and know them not as mere phenomena, or modes of the conscious self, but as something else and different. It is fashionable with some, no doubt, to say that by the very conditions of intelligence we *can* know only phenomena, by which they mean, as they tell us themselves, "the effects produced upon our consciousness by unknown external agencies."¹ But they cannot even say so much without implying that they know a good deal more. For if we can know only phenomena or modifications of our consciousness, how could we ever come to think of *external agencies affecting us*? How could we ever come to think of phenomena *as* phenomena? And especially, how could we possibly come to *know* them *as* phenomena? How could we even come to recognize modes of consciousness *as such*, except as in contrast with things which are known as *not* modes of consciousness? We can know things only as they are related to our intelligence, or are brought in some way under the conditions of cognition, be it granted ; but we can *think* of things or *imagine their possibility* only under the same conditions. And so, with that understanding, *everything of which we can predicate existence* must be a phenomenon ; that is to say, in thinking of it, in affirming its existence, *we* think of it, *we* affirm its existence, and thus inevitably relate it to ourselves. Not only all knowledge, but all being must thus be phenomenal and relative. And when we say so, so far from denying the relativity of knowledge, or doing

¹ Fiske's *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. I., part I., c. 1.

violence to it, we conceive that we give our adhesion to the only consistent, thorough-going doctrine of relativity which can be held—viz., that the possibility of thought is to us the measure of the possibility of things. For we thus bring *everything which can be supposed to exist* into relation, and so make it thinkable, knowable. There may be things, we have no doubt there are many things, which *we* as individuals cannot think of *now* from want of experience or contact with them, but if they can be thought of at all—if they are *ever* to be thought of by *any* intelligence *anywhere*, they come within the possibilities of thought, and are essentially cognizable; and if we exclude them from the possibilities of thought—but we cannot even suppose it without having already *included* them in thought. In the very act of affirming that they are, or in calling them by their name, in speaking of them as *they*, we assert their cognoscibility. *They* are in our thoughts of them. And only those who talk of things-in-themselves, of the Absolute as “that which exists out of all relations,” of the Infinitely Unknowable, and so forth, can be said to be guilty of absurdly and tacitly assuming that knowledge is not essentially relative. While speaking of the doctrine of relativity as if it were something peculiar to themselves, they at the same time deny it in the most positive and persistent fashion by asserting tacitly, if not in so many words, that that which exists out of all relation is that of whose existence alone we can be absolutely sure. *It*—the Infinitely Unknowable, the infinite and absolute Power, the Unconditioned, the Noumenon, or by whatever other name it may be called, is not known at all, it would seem, and cannot by the very conditions of

intelligence be ever known to anyone, creature or Creator, and yet from all accounts, and strange to say, it is *manifested* in all phenomena, and so must be *related* to them all, and is that which, as we must perceive, gives being and persistence to the cosmos. It is spoken of as the Reality of Realities, and yet, it would seem, it is—*Nothing*; for we cannot think or speak of it strictly as either one or many, they tell us, either as conscious or unconscious, intelligent or unintelligent, as active or passive—we cannot, in short, ascribe to it any determinate qualities, for that would be to relate it to thought, which we cannot do, and must be careful not to do; and yet we know that it is and that it is not a phenomenon; we know *that* it is and *what* it is, and yet we know nothing about it. It is a Humpty-Dumpty of an Abracadabra and unreason throughout; let it go.

It is unnecessary to prolong discussion on the point. No valid argument, so far as we can judge, can be urged against the external reality of the beauty we perceive from any tenable doctrine of the relativity of knowledge. If by saying that our knowledge is relative you mean that we can know only states of consciousness or modifications of the percipient subject, we not only cannot know anything of a beauty really inherent in things without, we cannot know anything of things without us at all—we cannot even know that there are such things. But if you mean that we can know things only as they are in some way related to us and as we have powers of apprehending them, we say, that of course; but that in no way invalidates the supposition that what we do apprehend is real and as it seems to be. That with different constitutions we might have different perceptions of external things is what

might naturally be expected ; but it does not necessarily follow from that that our perceptions now are in any way illusive or give us illusive forms and knowledge. It may be that there is a fulness in the universe of which we can have now but a faint conception and which requires a corresponding fulness and diversity of constitution for its apprehension. Our present perceptions, we may be sure, are not co-extensive with the infinitude of things without us ; and if with other powers and organs of perception, I should see things which I cannot see constituted as I am now, I would believe in their reality then as I now believe in the reality of the cosmos which I see. And if I should bear with me the remembrance of the present life, I would believe in the existence of both worlds as seen. Our knowledge though relative need not be phenomenal ; relativity in no way excludes reality, but rather embraces and presupposes it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAUTIFUL, AND ITS RELATIONS TO SOME ALLIED FORMS OF PERCEPTION AND THOUGHT.

HAVING found that beauty cannot reasonably be regarded as a creature simply of association, or a mere projection of the mind's sensibility, or of memories' pleasures, upon objects of perception and thought, but that it must, in a very large measure at least, be regarded as constitutive of the objects perceived, we have already determined one of the most important questions as to its nature. It is objective as well as subjective; real as well as ideal; a quality of things material as well as of things mental—of trees, and fields, and flowers as well as of thoughts, and fancies, and memories suffused with pleasure; and it has a permanence, too, as we shall see by and by, as lasting as matter with its forces and laws, or the relations of thought in the life divine, for these all imply it and contain it. And these, as it seems to us, and after what has been said upon the subject by so many Scottish metaphysicians in particular, are the most important features of the whole inquiry as to beauty.

But what is it? it will still be asked by the people and by philosophers; and the question lies, we have been told, on the very threshold of all aesthetic inquiries. It may be so. But let it lie where it may, the question is, speculatively and practically, of no

more importance comparatively than the question, what is wealth? to the possession of it, or than the question, what is water? to a draught for the thirsty. It may be well that I should be able to tell you what wealth is (though wiser men have failed); but it is of far more importance to myself and to the world at large that I should have money to pay my debts and common sense to guide me in the use of what I have. And it might be well, if it were possible, that I should give an altogether complete and exhaustive answer to the question, what is beauty? but it is vastly more important that I should be able to recognize it in its higher forms. And my failure (if I should fail) to tell you what it is, will not affect the question of my perception of it, nor of its existence as a quality of things external and conceptual, any more than a peasant's inability to tell you what a cow is affects the question of its existence, or of his power of recognizing one when it appears. And platitude though that may seem, I am afraid that it has not been sufficiently borne in mind. For arguments have been drawn from the variety of men's ideas and definitions of it in support of the opinion that beauty is unreal and unsubstantial as a mirage. But I may be able to distinguish objects though I cannot define them; and rocks are substantial though we may not agree in our definitions and ideas of what matter ultimately or generally is. We are all agreed that there is matter in the concrete, although we may have hazy and imperfect notions of it in the abstract; and we all can perceive that there is a beauty in things around us, although we may not be able to say what the beautiful is.

But more than that. To ask like Plato for a description or definition of beauty which is the beauty of

nothing in particular and yet of everything in general which is beautiful, and which everyone would agree to call beauty or the beautiful itself, is simply and absolutely to ask us to make *irrationality equivalent to reason*, or zero equal to the only reality. You first hypostatize an abstraction, making it something wholly unique—not a beautiful thing, but the beautiful itself, an object *per se*, and then you ask me to define it satisfactorily as a quality of almost all things in common: and there is to be no dispute about its beauty while yet no one has seen it in itself and there are all grades and varieties of mental capacity and perceptive power! By hypostatizing it you make it a *particular* while you ask me at the same time to define it as if it were *only a universal*; and, on the other hand, also, you think of it as a *universal* and ask me to describe it as if it were *only something individual and perceptible*. I may or may not be able to tell you wherein the beauty of this or that particular thing consists; but to ask me to say what beauty *in the abstract* is, and to expect me to give an answer which may be accepted as an adequate definition of it as *anywhere perceived*, is like asking me to *overlook every difference in my definition and yet to include all conceivable differences*. The thing is impossible, not because of my ignorance, but by reason of the contradiction it involves, and because of the absurdity of the demand that is made upon me.

There is a passage in Kant which ought to be pondered on and which is applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the question before us. "The old and celebrated question," he says, "with which people thought to drive logicians into a corner, and sought to bring them into it, that they might be obliged either to

have recourse to miserable sophisms or to confess their ignorance, and consequently the vanity of their whole art, is this: What is truth? The nominal definition of the truth, to wit, that it is the agreement of the cognition with its object, is here presented and presupposed; but they want to know what the universal and sure criterion of the truth of every cognition is. It is surely a stronger and more necessary proof of wisdom and insight to know what questions we may reasonably ask. For if the question is in itself absurd and demands a needless answer, it has not only the confusion of him who proposes it, but sometimes also the disadvantage of leading the unwary listener to absurd answers, and of presenting the ridiculous spectacle of 'the one,' as said the ancients, 'milking the he-goat, the other holding the sieve.'

"If truth consists in the agreement of a cognition with its object, that object must thereby be distinguished from others; for a cognition is false if it does not agree with the object to which it is related, although it may contain something which may be valid for other objects. Now, a universal criterion of truth would be that which would be valid for all cognitions without distinction of their objects. But it is clear that since, in the case of such a criterion, we abstract from all content of the cognition (relation to its object), and truth relates precisely to this content, it is wholly impossible and absurd to ask for a mark of the truth of this content of the cognition; and that consequently a sufficient, and at the same time universal, test of the truth cannot possibly be given. And as we have already named the content of a cognition, its *matter*, we must say: Of the truth of the

cognition in respect of its matter, no universal test can be demanded, because it is self-contradictory.”¹

If that representation of things, then, is true (and the remarks will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to all such questions as, what is wealth? what is force? what is feeling? etc., as well as to the question, what is truth?), it is not to be wondered at that various, and always more or less imperfect, answers should have been given to the question, what is beauty? Of them all we may say, not so much that they are wrong, as that they are vague and utterly inadequate, as they could not but be in answer to such a question. They have been reassertions simply of phases or degrees of the beauty which they have been supposed to define. Utility, fitness, symmetry, order, proportion, unity in variety, expression, correspondence to the idea, perfection, etc., may all be taken as forms of the beautiful, or as constituents of the beauty of certain things and of the world as a whole; but they do not, even when all put together, express all that is contained in beauty, and no more would any words that we could frame into a sentence, or half a dozen sentences, or pages. No help in the actual recognition of beauty has ever been derived from the supposed-to-be definitions of it. We turn from them all with a vague sense of helplessness and confusion to the contemplation of a lovely colour, or face, or sky, or landscape, or to the consideration of a piece of statuary, or of a poem, or song, and we feel at once how ludicrously inadequate, and worse than useless even, they are all in practice. “One impulse from a vernal wood” gives us more understanding in the matter than all the wisdom of the sages. It may be true in a measure, as Hegel informs us, that beauty

¹ *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, pp. 103-6, second edition (Kirchmann's).

is "the sensuous appearing of the idea," and that it is "in itself infinite and free."¹ But what is "the idea"? Where does it appear, and when? And how are we to know it? And why should a sensuous appearance be thought necessary for the apprehension of it as beautiful? It may be interesting again to be told by a man like Sir William Hamilton that "a thing beautiful is one whose form occupies the imagination and understanding in a free and full, and consequently in an agreeable, activity."² But notwithstanding his assuring us that "to this definition of the beautiful all others may without difficulty be reduced," we confess our inability to see how it can be applied to the blue of the sky, or to a thousand other things in nature and art; and, if it may be said to include the beautiful, it may also be said to include and be applicable to an infinitude of things that have nothing to do directly with beauty. And when all is done, it tells us what the beautiful *does* rather than what it *is*. It may be well again to be reminded, as we have been by an American professor, that "the beautiful is truth—the truth of eternal, as distinguished from merely accidental, arbitrary or conventional relations";³ but that it is everywhere a "felt conformity to law" could be maintained, we fear, only in opposition to fact and experience. And to say with Gauckler that the philosophic definition of the beautiful is "the true manifestation of the unity of Being by finite phenomena,"⁴ is to draw our attention to an aspect of beauty which we are apt to overlook; but such a "philosophic defini-

¹ *Asthetik*, vol. i., pp. 141-2, second edition.

² *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. ii., p. 512.

³ *A Theory of Fine Art*. By Joseph Torrey, late Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy in Vermont University, c. 2.

⁴ *Le Beau et son Histoire*, Paris, 1873, p. 14.

tion" leaves us without a clue to the beauty individually of the things we see. It is too philosophic to be of any practical use.

These are a few of the more recent attempts at a definition of the beautiful; and, like other definitions, they are nearly as far from the mark as the answers that were given to the same question in the *Hippias Major* some two thousand years ago. It may not be manifestly so absurd to say that beauty is unity in variety, or truth, or "the absolute in sensuous existence," as to say that it is gold, or a fine vase, or a fair woman, or any such concrete object; but the one set of definitions equally with the other directs our attention only to *beautiful things* instead of to *beauty itself*. They are simply reassertions in part of what was to be defined. The mistake, however, has been not so much in the answer as in the attempt at all at answering the question for which they have been framed. It has been an attempt, as we have been saying, to accomplish the impossible. And if we would make any progress in aesthetics in a practical direction, and save our discussions on the subject from the charge of barrenness and vanity, we must change the question, what is beauty? into the more reasonable and answerable one, what is the beauty of *this or that object*? Wherein does it lie? In its colour, or form, or expression, or what? While we would give up as an absurdity the hunt for the essence of beauty in itself, we are agreed that "to discover what it is in things which makes them beautiful or ugly, sublime or ludicrous, is one constant factor in the aesthetic problem";¹ for there is no reason why we should not be able in

¹ "Aesthetics," by James Sully, M.A., *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ninth edition.

general to discover wherein the beauty of this or that individual object, or species of objects, consists. The growth of intelligence indeed, and the degree of our education and culture, may to a large extent be measured by our power of aesthetic discrimination. But when we thus change the question from what is beauty? to what is the beauty of this or that object? we remove our problem in a large measure from the sphere of metaphysics to that of practical life and put it into the hands of specialists; and we are led to see, perhaps more clearly than we otherwise could, that there is a large amount of common sense in some of the most ideal speculations of metaphysicians; and to these two points we would now direct our attention in passing.

And, first, by changing the question, what is beauty? to the more rational and answerable one, what is it that makes this or that object beautiful? we remove the problem, we say, in a large measure, though not altogether, from the sphere of metaphysics to that of practical life, and we put it very much into the hands of specialists. One does not need to be much of a metaphysician to say why he thinks such and such a thing so beautiful—a female head of hair for instance. There is so much of it, he would say, if he were a European. It is so long, so soft and glossy, and so forth. And there is nothing more abstruse or difficult in a question as to the beauty of a sunset or a Canadian forest in autumn. It lies in the variety and splendour, the gorgeousness and harmony, of the colours and the delicacy of the tints exhibited. And so in a great measure with flowers and birds and dresses and carpets and pictures and other things. The colours have much to do with our admiration

or selection of them. But when we come to "the human face divine" it is not so easy to say in certain cases wherein the beauty of it lies. For there is a greater complexity of elements to determine our judgment one way or another, and sometimes there is a subtle something in a face which compels our admiration, but which we cannot exactly name. But unity in variety, and form, and colour, and smoothness, and proportion, and symmetry, and expression are all at least needed for the greatest degree of aesthetic pleasure. The face must be one with many features. It must have such and such an outline. The eyes must be in such a position relatively to each other, of such a form and colour and so large, and the eyelashes must be so long and of a colour with the eyebrows and hair. The nose and the mouth must be so large and of such a form, and each of them again of such a colour and in such a position. If the nose were flat or turned up, or the mouth at one side, it would spoil the general effect; and if the eyes were one of them small and the other large, or not in a like position in the head, the face would be more or less repulsive. Or if the eyes and nose and mouth were all that they should be and of the best of colours, and the rest of the face pale as a stucco bust or deeply pitted or prominently pimpled, we would still be more or less repelled and shocked. And if colour and contour were all that could be desired, and all the various parts that go to the formation of a face otherwise as they should be, but without animation or spirit behind and within them, we would be as far as ever from the pleasure of gazing on perfect loveliness. Waxwork figures may be perfect as imitations of

form and colour, but without animation, or the free expression of spirit, how hideous at the same time they may be! Certain features then must appear in a face which has the slightest chance of being generally recognized as beautiful; and while, from their number and complexity they may not all be often named in so many words, they are yet generally such as are easily apprehended and understood, and they enter into the taste of everyone who has a knowledge of the class of face he is judging.

Of the class of face he is judging, I have said. For evidently the forms and colours which go to the formation of a beautiful European face may not be identical with those which enter into the facial beauty of every race. The points of beauty of a black man are not the same as those of the white. But there is an African beauty as well as a European, and each of them has to be judged to a considerable extent by an idea and standard of its own. It would be as absurd to judge of the beauty of a negro by the ideal of an English lady, say, as it would to judge of the beauty of one species of hen or pigeon by the ideal points of another. Each of these must be judged on its own merits and in accordance with the idea of its own variety or species, and not with that of another. And so with every class and species of creature under the sun. You cannot tell what a horse should be like by looking at a cow, nor would we say that the dray-horse is ugly because it has not the lightness of foot and of form of the racer. Every variety and every species in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms has to be judged, and, as a matter of fact is judged, by its peculiarities rather than by its points of likeness to other varieties and

species. It is in these peculiarities especially that its beauty as one of a variety or species will lie, and it needs a practised eye and a man of experience to tell which among a number are the most beautiful of their kind. 'Every man to his own business' holds good in aesthetics as well as in trade and commerce, and if, instead of asking the metaphysician for an answer to the question, what is beauty? you would ask a botanist or gardener for the beauty of the different species of plants with which he was specially acquainted, and the judges at a cattle-show why they adjudge the prize to this or that animal, or the artist or musician why he prefers this or that painting or piece of composition, you would be much more likely to get a satisfactory reply to your question. There are some who, by knowledge and natural gifts, are better qualified for giving a correct decision in this or that department than others, and these above all of course should be consulted by one who wants information. And thus we have in art especially an essential connection between the True and the Beautiful, for no more damaging criticism can be passed, and no more commonly expressed conviction of the rationality of nature, than 'It isn't natural.'

But while, by narrowing the problem to particular things, we, on the one hand, remove it in a measure from the sphere of metaphysics to that of every-day practical life, we bring out the fact more clearly, on the other, that every man has a metaphysics of his own, though he may not be a metaphysician, and we get glimpses into the sobriety and strong common sense—into the truth and reality—of speculations and opinions which might otherwise seem quite arbitrary and unreal. For how can we judge that

this or that object is one of the beautiful of its kind without the tacit assumption and implication of *an ideal standard for each*? And what is practical knowledge and taste in any department of art but the more or less conscious application of such a standard and the judgment of its embodiment in reality? Before we can speak of anything as a good specimen of its kind, or sit in judgment on the comparative merits of the individuals of any species, we must evidently have some idea of what would constitute perfection in that kind or species—we must imagine and in some way take it for granted that we know what the individuals of the kind or species should be like. We somehow bring with us, that is to say, an idea of perfection and look for its embodiment in reality, and we judge of the merits of each individual by its agreement or disagreement with that idea. And so we have all within us, it would seem, the root of the old quarrel between Nominalism and Realism, and we can see from our own experience how that quarrel might arise and how the question involved could be made the subject of discussion still, and we should also be ready to appreciate the thought which has been variously expressed since Plato's time, that the essence of beauty lies in the relation between the idea to be expressed and the medium of its expression, whether that medium be found in nature or in art. The thought is implied in the judgments of us all, though we may not admit that it is the all in all of beauty. "We ask why any form that exists is not beautiful: why an elm but half-rooted, with square trunk, with precisely horizontal boughs scattered at random from the centre line, a spray and foliage different in position and shape and hue, a square

smooth-lined black leaf, should not satisfy an aesthetic sense as well as any other tree of the species. Why an imperfect tree in any respect, imperfect because it was robbed of its needed soil and nutriment of light and warmth and vapour, or was scathed by excessive heat, or benumbed by the untimely frost, or was mutilated by axe, or hurricane, or other instrument of rude violence, does not please our taste? The answer is, and the answer is the only answer that can be given, while it is on the deepest aesthetic principles satisfactory, that somehow or other, more or less imperfectly, more or less unconsciously, we have come to know and to feel, that is to know deeply though imperfectly as to the grounds of our knowledge, so deeply as to move and shape our sensibility, that the creative idea of a perfect organic elm-life could be realized only with such roots, such trunk, such spray and foliage. The constituent of the beauty lies in this or that particular form and shape because it is the necessary form and shape for the idea of an elm in the creative mind. And, just in proportion as our intelligence is enlightened and informed as to the relations of the branch and leaf to the perfection of the tree life the richer will be its beauty to us."¹

There is a truth of common sense in that passage which has a wide range of application, a truth which is implied in all our judgments as to the relative beauty of the different individuals of a species and which has been expressed by other inquirers into the essence of beauty as 'perfection in kind.'² But if we take each

¹ *Science of Aesthetics*, by H. N. Day, New Haven, Conn., 1872, c. 11, sec. 338.

² "If we analyze our conception of beauty, it will be found to be but another name for perfection. . . . A beautiful object or emotion means neither more nor less than an object or emotion perfect in its kind."—Art. "Real and Ideal Beauty" in *Blackwood's Magazine* for December, 1853.

thing of its kind as a more or less imperfect or perfect expression of an idea, and if we naturally judge it by its correspondence or non-correspondence with that idea, we come perilously near making nature in all its details and as a whole, do we not? a work of art, and so an expression and embodiment of spirit; and we should further be able to catch at least a glimpse of reason in the opinion of those who would make all beauty spiritual, or the expression of purpose and intelligence. "Every form," says Reid, "unorganized, vegetable, or animal, derives its beauty from the purposes to which it is subservient, or from the signs of wisdom, or of other mental qualities which it exhibits."¹ "Consider the figure of a man in repose," says Cousin; "it is more beautiful than that of an animal, the figure of an animal is more beautiful than the form of any inanimate object. It is because the human figure, even in the absence of virtue and genius, always reflects sentiment at least and something of soul, if not the soul entire. If from man and the animal we descend to purely physical nature, we shall still find beauty there, as long as we find there some shade of intelligence, I know not what, that awakens in us some thought, some sentiment. Do we arrive at some piece of matter that expresses nothing, that signifies nothing, neither is the idea of beauty applied to it. But everything that exists is animated. Matter is shaped and penetrated by forces that are not material, and it obeys laws that attest an intelligence everywhere present. The most subtle chemical analysis does not reach a dead and inert nature, but a nature that is organized in its own way, that is deprived neither of forces nor laws. In the depths of the earth as in the

¹ *Intellectual Powers*, essay viiii., c. 4.

heights of the heavens, in a grain of sand as in a gigantic mountain, an immortal spirit shines through the thickest coverings. Let us contemplate nature with the eye of the soul as well as with the eye of the body—everywhere a moral expression will strike us and the forms of things will impress us as symbols of thought. We have said that with man, and with the animal even, the figure is beautiful on account of the expression; but, when you are on the summit of the Alps, or before the immense ocean, when you behold the rising or the setting of the sun at the beginning or the close of day, do not these imposing pictures produce on you a moral effect? Do all these spectacles appear only for the sake of appearing? Do we not regard them as manifestations of an admirable power, intelligence, and wisdom? And, thus to speak, is not the face of nature expressive like that of man? Physical beauty, then, is the sign of an internal beauty, which is spiritual and moral beauty, and this is the fountain, the principle, the unity of the Beautiful.”¹ And to the same effect in some passages write Ruskin,² and Macvicar,³ and Gauckler,⁴ and others.

While recognizing, however, the truth in such statements and their comparative importance in the sphere of aesthetics, and especially in art, there is one point of criticism to which they are manifestly open when they are offered as explanations of beauty universally. They seem to assert that nature, animal and vegetable forms and colours—all things, are

¹ *The True, the Beautiful, and the Good*, lecture viii.

² *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., part 3, c. 12, sections 10 and 11.

³ *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, c. 2.

⁴ *Le Beau et son Histoire*, ca. 1 and 4.

beautiful only so far as they are expressive to us, or *are seen to be* symbolic, of spirit in some one or more of its modifications. Now, there is a beauty of expression, be it granted, and a beauty of analogy to mind, and it may be that beauty of every description is to be traced to mind as its ultimate source and head; or that it involves thought in its last analysis and explanation, and so that all beauty may be said in a sense to be mental; but it is not true that we see things as beautiful *only* as they are expressive to us of purpose, or intelligence, or emotion. We perceive a beauty of forms and colours and sounds at once, and if by closer inspection or further reflection we recognize in them any analogy to anything that we have hitherto felt or seen, or if we perceive the purpose they serve, or the design and labour they involve or express, they may seem to us *all the more* beautiful and valuable for it; but it is to be noted that, while our perception of beauty in external things is generally instantaneous, our discovery of purpose and design is later in the order of intelligence, and so they cannot constitute the beauty which we first perceive. We look upon nature, upon trees, and birds, and butterflies, and flowers, and we see them at once as beautiful, and in our childhood as well as our manhood; and then by closer observation and thought we discover in them, it may be, design or marks of intelligence and wisdom. But there is not one in a thousand who ever thinks of the forms and colours of the vegetable world, say, which he deems so fair as significant or symbolic of spirit. The expression, the symbolism of nature in her myriad forms and hues can be discerned only by the few who have heart and soul enough within them and training to enable them to see it; and even then it will be dis-

cerned only in calm and contemplative philosophic moods. But there is a beauty abroad which is visible to all in civilized communities, however uncultured and unreflective they may be, or however dull their comprehension—a beauty which they may catch at once without knowing its meaning or asking the whence, or the how, or the wherefore of it; and therefore it cannot be correct to say that material forms and colours are beautiful only as they are perceived to be signs of mental qualities, or to serve a purpose. “There is more than meets the eye,” and we must “contemplate nature with the eye of the soul as well as with the eye of the body,” it is true; but simply because there is something which the eye of the soul is not needed to contemplate, because there is *something* which meets the eye of the body, there is a beauty, it would seem to be granted, which is not consciously perceived to be symbolic, a beauty which is material, a beauty of outward forms and colours which is not dependent for its existence or perception on any train of thought, or flight of imagination, or exercise of memory through association. There is a beauty which is seen with the eye of the body, and a beauty which is seen by the eye of the soul, but these are not exclusive, and we recognize them both.¹

We would seem, then, to have already determined

¹ The point of our objection was seen and expressed by Jonathan Edwards in his *Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue*, c. 3, 2 and 4. “God in establishing such a law,” he says, “that mutual natural agreement of different things, in form, quantity, etc., should appear beautiful or grateful to men, seems to have had regard to the *resemblance* there is in such a natural agreement, to that spiritual, cordial agreement wherein original beauty consists. But it is not any reflection upon, or perception of, such a resemblance that is the reason why such a form or state of objects appear beautiful to men; but their sensation of pleasure, on a view of this secondary beauty, is immediately owing to the law God has established, or the instinct He has given.”

the question as to the unity or diversity in kind of the beautiful. It is one in the abstract just as matter is one, or force is one, or feeling is one, or poetry is one ; but, like each of these too, it exists in diversity of manifestation and is manifold in kind in the concrete. There is matter organized and unorganized ; non-vitalized and vital ; mineral, vegetable, and animal ; solid, liquid, gaseous, and radiant ; matter as flesh, fish, and fowl, etc., etc. ; and it would be as vain to deny its diversity in kind as its unity, and vainer than either to seek a definition of it in the abstract that would adequately express every concrete manifestation of it. There is force, too, bodily and mental—the force of a blow, force of mind, the force of a remark, a police force, vital force, and so on ; and whether we define it as “the rate of change of momentum,” or “whatever changes or tends to change the motion of a body by altering either its direction or its magnitude,” or as merely “an inference from motion under the universal conditions of reality,”¹ or as something else, we shall fail in clothing the reality in words, and equally fail in doing away with the idea of it as diverse in kind while one in concept and language.² Force includes many forces ; matter many kinds of it ; and in the concept feeling there are likewise embraced “the most different, yea, the most opposite elements.” There are feelings of pleasure and feelings of pain ; of heat and of cold ; of muscular tension and lassitude ;

¹ *Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics*, by J. B. Stallo, pp. 166-167.

² Professor Tait, while defining force as “any cause which alters or tends to alter a body’s natural state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line,” tells us that it has no objective existence, that it appears to be a “mere name,” and that “it is in all probability destined to be relegated to that Limbo which has already received the Crystal Spheres of the Planets and the Four Elements, along with Caloric and Phlogiston, the Electric Fluid and the Odic or Psychic Force.”—*Recent Advances in Physical Science*.

of hatred, and aversion, and self-satisfaction; of honour and shame; of right and wrong; of power and weakness; of health, and friendship, and love; corporeal feeling, moral feeling, religious feeling, æsthetic feeling, etc.; and while all these are positively one in that they are feelings, and not merely in the negative aspect that they are "not abstract concepts,"¹ we cannot tell what feeling is, although we may note some of the conditions of its existence, and say what it is not. But we know that it is one while many, and that its manifoldness involves its unity, and *vice versa*. And so with poetry and beauty. They are each of them diverse in kind while one in concept—the general and the individual, the universal and the particular, inter-penetrating and including one another.

But while beauty may be as various almost as the things perceived by eye and ear, by the imagination, the moral sense, the intellect, and reason, and while we cannot give, and *cannot in reason be asked for*, a definition of it that will comprehend it in all its forms and phases, we shall find that every beautiful object when perceived and thought of as beautiful gives rise invariably to a certain class of emotions. A thought, a poem, a picture, a succession or combination of sounds, a life, an eye, and a tree may each of them be beautiful; and if they are so, we shall at least be *pleased* with each, and pleased with them whether we can call them our own or not, and independently of any end they may serve. Our judgment of them as beautiful is wholly disinterested—our interest, that is to say, is in no case the ground or reason of our judgment; and the satisfaction for the time with

¹ Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Buch I., sec. 11.

which we contemplate them will not be lessened by the fact that they may belong to another. But *when once we have perceived their beauty*, we shall have an interest in them, and a desire, within certain limits for *their perpetuation or repetition*, or for something which will be equally good of its kind. That, I think, will be found to be universally the case. We would like what is beautiful, whether it belongs to us or not, to be permanent, or revivable at pleasure. A song, however fine, might come to be monotonous, and still more a sermon if oft repeated; but when once we have good music, we desire to hear just as good again, and a *divine discontentment* with what falls short of it, and an aspiration for something better than the common takes possession of us. We want to have the "permanent possibility" of good singing, fine sermons and orations, and so forth. And so the beautiful is allied to the good and the useful. To the good: for a pure and holy character is always beautiful, and what awakens within us a divine discontentment, as we have put it, and acts as a motive power to a higher life, is good for us mentally and morally, as well as pleasant outwardly. And as beautiful things do so, they are elements in the education of the whole man and of the race. And, if so, they are useful—useful at least as a factor in our education and as a stimulus to progression. And in many things, indeed, the beautiful and the useful are inseparable. "In nature all is useful, all is beautiful." "There is a compelling reason in the uses of the plant for every novelty of colour or form."¹ "Some of the most beautiful lines on the surface of shells are simply the lines of their annual growth,

¹ Emerson's *Conduct of Life*, c. 8.

which growth has followed definite curves, and it is the 'law' of these curves that is beautiful in our eyes. Again, the forms of many fish, which are so beautiful, are also forms founded on the lines of least resistance. The same observation applies to the form of the bodies and of the wings of birds. Throughout nature, ornament is perpetually the result of conditions and arrangements fitted to use, and contrived for the discharge of function. But the same principle applies to human art, and few persons are probably aware how many of the mere ornaments of architecture are the traditional representation of parts which had their origin in essential structure."¹

But not only are we pleased with what is beautiful, and desire its permanence, or the possibility of its repetition, we also *want others to enjoy it with us.*² And how natural, how instinctive and universal that desire is, is shown in the shout of satisfaction with which when in company children and adults alike hail the unexpected appearance of what captivates for the moment the eye or the ear, and by the delight with which we show and tell each other of what we have seen or heard in our travels, or thought of in our dreams in our sleep or when ~~awake~~. And, as bearing on the same point, we have little anxiety about our personal appearance when in utter solitude; nor do we care very much in such a case what may be the form or appearance of our habitation, so long as it may

¹ *The Reign of Law*, by the Duke of Argyll.

² Compare Bain on *The Emotions and the Will*, c. 14, 1, 2, 3; and especially Kant's *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, Buch ii., sect. 41. I had not read the *Critique* when this paragraph and the preceding one was composed, and I thought, from what I had read in histories of philosophy, that I was arguing in apparent opposition to Kant. But I find that not only are my ideas quite in harmony with his, but my language is close enough to his to make it seem but an echo or transcript of it.

be comfortable and convenient. A Robinson Crusoe in his lonely island may, so far as his looks and surroundings go, be as happy as a king in the most magnificent of palaces, and a Mountain Jim¹ of modern times, though with the manners and education of a gentleman, may, like Crusoe, be quite content to rough it in the rudest of huts, and with the most primitive simplicity of dress. "From towns and toil remote" we are careless comparatively of appearances. But let the world look in upon us and our ways, and then the old hereditary instinct (if such it may be called), by which birds display their feathers, and animals their strength and grace, in courtship, again asserts its power, and our taste is displayed in personal adornment, and our houses and our lawns and everything that pertains to us is made to look its best. And the more we are set free from the exigencies of labour, and the more of leisure we have for each other's company, and the more cultured and educated we become, the more intense is the desire for beauty and grace in all our movements and surroundings, and in every way in which we can express ourselves to one another. And all that would seem to indicate that beauty is *for the eyes of others*, and that so far its life is in its appearance. It is for looks, for appearance, for attraction and admiration; and it is expressive in final analysis perhaps of sociability and sympathy, and in a measure of beneficence. All ornamentation has a tacit reference or relation to the thoughts and likings of others. It is for pleasure—not for selfish pleasure, but for social pleasure and mutual enjoyment; and the conscious giving of pleasure aesthetically is a beneficence.

¹ Jim is depicted in *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, by Isabella L. Bird.

And our desire to please by beauty is in the way of obedience to natural law. It is the expression of a desire of nature through us. What then, we may ask, if all the beauty which we behold in the universe by night and by day, in colour and form, by tone and through motion, should be expressive of *the essential sociability and sympathy of the Absolute Spirit*, who is God, and the form in which He is seeking to draw by admiration all finite spirits into sympathy with Himself? Is it not there for pleasure and enjoyment? We do not say for *our* pleasure *alone*, observe, nor necessarily for the enjoyment of *man*. For then might the question be inconveniently asked, "Were the beautiful volute and cone shells of the Eocene epoch, and the gracefully-sculptured ammonites of the Secondary period, created that man might ages afterwards admire them in his cabinet?"¹ But even from an evolutionist point of view, the beauty of flowers was an attraction to insects, and that of berries to birds long before the advent of man; and where aesthetic pleasure in the scale of creation downwards altogether ceases, we cannot tell. And then, turning to the opposite pole of perception and thought, we have had hints and dreams of a communion of Spirit within the Divine Nature everlastingly, and the Word made flesh drew attention to the lilies of the field, and spoke of God as clothing them with such beauty that "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one" of them. And what though "many a flower is born to blush unseen"—unseen by man, "if purer sprights," as another poet sings,

" By moonlight o'er their dewy bosoms lean
T' adore the Father of all gentle lights "†

¹ Darwin's *Origin of Species*, c. 6.

² Keble's *Christian Year*: Third Sunday after Trinity.

At any rate, and as a matter of fact, the beauty of the world gives us enjoyment, intensity of pleasure, and has a soothing, healing, and refreshing influence on the soul, and the more so in proportion to the mental development and culture of society; and why should it not be thought to have been the function and reason of beauty from the beginning that it should please? that it should be the medium of the expression of sympathy and good-will between spirit and spirit, and as a sign like the rainbow that God is in covenant with us and with the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air? That may not be the *only* end of its existence; but can we suppose it, looking at it from a purely scientific point of view, to be *without a function in nature*? and is not function equivalent to expressed purpose or design, and purpose and design to thought and intelligence? And if when we find that a thing is of use in the economy of nature, we say, as scientific men are constantly saying, that its use is the purpose, or one of the purposes, of it, can we consistently refuse to admit that when a thing is found to please pleasure is its purpose, or one of its purposes? It would seem that we cannot. And so all nature, the whole universe of things around us, may in that way of it, and notwithstanding Mill's terrible indictment of it as cruel, be said to be expressive of sympathy and beneficence; and Gauckler's philosophic definition of beauty as "the true manifestation of the unity of Being by finite phenomena" may have a deeper thought in it than at first sight appears. "It is the inward revelation of this unity (the unity of Being) which raises our soul in the religious sentiment when it shoots towards the infinite; and it is this unity of life and substance in the finite world manifested by their union, by the

true expression of the invisible by the visible, of the incomprehensible by the phenomenon, which gives birth to the sentiment of the beautiful. Brother of the religious sentiment, it has always kept by its side ; and, though sometimes confounded with it by ignorance, it has in all times helped human souls to rise towards the sky.”¹

¹ *Le Beau et son Histoire*, c. 1.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEAUTIFUL, THE PICTURESQUE, AND THE SUBLIME.

VARIOUS attempts, more or less elaborate, have been made at classifying the different kinds of beauty ; but, like the search for the essence of beauty in itself, and for the same reason, they have not been attended with much success. There is always a something in it which eludes the grasp, a refractory element which refuses to be boxed—to be “cabined, cribbed, and confined” by any studied set of words and phrases; and as soon as we have got, as we think, our beauties all safely ranged into classes and labelled generally as free or absolute and dependent or relative, or as physical, intellectual, and moral, or as something else, we shall find that our classes might about as well be reversed and each take the name of the other. The relative will be found, perhaps, to be the absolute, and the absolute the relative, according as you look at them ; and whether any beauty in particular is physical, intellectual, or moral, or something of all the three, or nothing of any of them, might possibly be a very fair subject for discussion. And the same may be said of the customary division, or classification, at the head of this chapter. If, when thinking of the carnage of a battlefield and of the blood through which the men had to move, we should speak of the soldiers as “red wat shod,” or mournfully sing of “the flowers

of the forest" as "a' wede awa," would our language be beautiful, or picturesque, or sublime, or something of all the three? Coleridge's "Genevieve" may be said to be exquisitely beautiful; but when in Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark" we read,

" In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run :
Like an embodied Joy whose race is just begun,"

have we not a fusion of all the three elements of emotion which arise from the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime? And how are we to tell where the one begins and the other ends? Or take the starry sky. The beautiful and the sublime in one, with a touch of the picturesque.

But while many things may be pronounced to be beautiful, or picturesque, or sublime, or all the three, according as we look at them, and while the beautiful in the most general sense of it may be said to include the other two, being related to them as the genus to the species, it is evident that when we speak of them as we have been doing, they must each of them be employed in a distinctive sense and have aspects and characteristics of their own. The beautiful is no longer used as inclusive of all that may give us aesthetic pleasure, but as distinguished from the picturesque on the one hand, and from the sublime on the other, which certainly both please us aesthetically; and before attempting any analysis of the sublime, to the consideration of which we more especially devote this chapter, it may be interesting to trace the grading and naming of the beautiful generally and in the largest

sense of it in the common thoughts and consciousness of men.

Recognizing always the essential relativity of beauty, and consequently the fact that what one might call by one name, another might call by another, according to his experience and culture, and the bent of his genius, while yet from the same point of view, and with the same facts before us we might all agree in our language, the lowest stage of the beautiful perhaps which we recognize in our speech is *the pretty*. It is all perhaps that the child and the savage can generally apprehend. Any colour, or form, or sound, or motion may be pretty as compared with any other colour, or form, or sound, or motion; and of course there are *degrees* of prettiness among objects from the faintest or dullest of colours to the brightest and most intense that can be seen, and from the simplest of forms and movements to all combinations of them. When we advance in our admiration of an object so far as to call it *very pretty*, we are in perception and emotion on the borderland of the distinctively beautiful. We, in fact, may be said to be within it. For not only might another call beautiful a thing which we would say was only very pretty, but we ourselves might (with the faintest emphasis it may be, but still we might) call it beautiful in the very same breath almost in which we called it pretty; and a very little in addition to the object—an addition in intensity, or quantity, or quality—of something more, or of an altogether new element, might carry us wholly into the sphere of the distinctively and emphatically beautiful, when the use of the word pretty would be felt to be altogether too tame to be expressive of our emotion and judgment. It is not to be thought, however, that pretty is applic-

able only to things that are small. A "pretty little thing" is a very common expression of commendation or opinion, and the tiniest of things may be worthy of it. But quantity is not all the difference between things beautiful of their kind and things pretty. Degree of intensity in quality, or in expression, may sometimes make the difference, or the new feature of blending of shades, or ease of transition from point to point. The colours of leaves in autumn, or of the clouds in a western sky at sunset, may pass as they deepen in shade through all degrees of prettiness to the very perfection of beauty; and so pretty may be applied to a landscape as well as to the smallest of flowers, to an evening sky or long poetical composition as well as to a spot on a butterfly's wing or a musical chord, and to objects of all sorts and sizes.

But while what is pretty may be either large or small, beauty as distinguished from prettiness demands, at least in certain cases, the normal size of the species. Nothing that is manifestly dwarfish in appearance can be distinctively beautiful. A Minnie Warren might have all the regularity of feature and of colour which we could think of a woman possessing, the expression of the face might be pleasing, and her manner all that could be desired; but we would hardly say, for all that, that she was emphatically beautiful. Pretty she might be, and very pretty too after a fashion; but she would require to be greatly enlarged, and that perhaps, according to the notion of the ancient Greeks, to more than a medium size, before she could be called emphatically a beautiful woman. And so with the individuals of every species. There must be a certain congruity with type or pattern, and a fulfilment of the idea of

the normal formation and growth of its kind, before we can pronounce any object emphatically beautiful. But otherwise, things so called may range in size from an atom to a world, from the simplest of movements to the greatest complexity in gyration or sound, and from a single phrase or thought to any piece of composition in prose, or poetry, or mathematical demonstration, that can be easily grasped as a whole by the understanding. And this last limitation and condition gives rise to the remark that, while "the eye and the ear are the great avenues to the mind for the aesthetic class of influences," aesthetic pleasure is not limited in its source to objects of sensuous perception alone, nor only to things that can be seen and heard. It may be an abuse of language to speak of the pleasure derived from the gustatory organs as aesthetic—of what we may be eating as "just beautiful" or "lovely"; but we may speak in strict correctness of an object as *beautifully smooth*. And while such phrases may always have a tacit reference to the eye, that is to say, to things that are visually perceptible, yet smoothness is a quality that is primarily and emphatically perceptible tactually; and we may speak with propriety, I am inclined to think, of the beauty of a smoothness that may only be *felt*. But, however that may be, there can be no question that there is a prettiness and a beauty that are supra-sensuous, that can be perceived by neither the eye nor the ear, but which yet may be mentally grasped with the greatest degree of aesthetic pleasure. A thought, a demonstration or chain of reasoning, a law, a moral character, though they may be made known through sensible objects, cannot be seen by

the eye nor heard by the ear, yet they can be perceived, they can be known with a certainty which does not pertain to material things. They are things of thought, no objects of sense at all, but supra-sensuous or spiritual; and, when made known through the arts, in nature, or by human life, or when perceived by the reason in any way, they afford the very highest degree of aesthetic pleasure. They are *par excellence*, we may say, the things of beauty.

It is different with the picturesque. It has reference always directly or indirectly *to the eye, and to the eye alone perhaps of all the senses*. Stewart, it is true, draws attention to the application of the word by Dr. Warton "to a passage of Thomson, where it is somewhat curious," he says, "that every circumstance mentioned recalls some impression upon the ear alone."¹ But it is in the picture drawn of the scene, and not in the sounds referred to, that the picturesqueness of the description lies.

" Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noise; while at his evening watch,
The village dog deters the nightly thief:
The heifer lows; the distant waterfall
Swells in the breeze; and with the hasty tread
Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain
Shakes from afar." ²

The passage is beautifully descriptive it may be; but the picturesqueness of it is in the objects or scenes depicted for the eye—the frosty evening with the dog on the watch for the thief, the heifer which we imagine to be in the field or by the side of the farmhouse, the waterfall, and the traveller wending his way through the plain. Every circumstance men-

¹ *Essay on the Beautiful*, c. 5.

² "Winter," 732.

tioned may have been made to recall some sound, and the sound may enhance the pleasure of our contemplation of the picture as a whole ; but it is the "circumstance," and not the sound, that makes the passage picturesque. The sound is incidental and could be dispensed with without destroying the picturesque effect ; but take away what is represented for the eye, and what picture would we have in the sound ? No conceivable picture at all. And so we say that the picturesque has reference always directly or indirectly to the eye, and to the eye alone perhaps of all the senses. In a vague and general way it may be said to be that aspect of the beautiful generally which is, or may be, represented with striking and pleasing effect in a picture, or which produces on the mind, through the remembrance of things seen, an effect analogous to that of an object so represented. The latter clause will include style in composition. A picturesque style cannot be represented by anything but itself ; but it is picturesque because it is after the manner or in the spirit of a painter, or because it brings before us vividly a picture of the objects or scenes described or spoken of. It is picturesque because of our recollection of objects of sense and our power of recalling them in thought. It has still implicitly a reference or relation to the eye. It conveys the idea of something that might be *seen*, not heard nor smelled.

The picturesque, however, as distinguished from the beautiful, implies also *a considerable extent in the field of vision, a certain degree of ruggedness, and usually also of prominence of variety in aspect*. A simple flower, an animal, or a house by itself, a rock, or a flash of lightning may be put into a picture ; but no such

thing by itself, and apart from the surroundings, would be likely to be thought of as picturesque. But let the flower be a water-lily by the margin of a lake in which wild fowl swim, or a boat is moored, and let hills appear in the background, or trees which dapple the lake with their shadow ; let the animal be a goat or chamois on the edge of a cliff, beneath which crawls the sea, reflecting the sky and the clouds, or let it be an ass with panniers driven along a dusty road by the side of a mountain stream, or idling by a gipsy's tent from which smoke is curling upwards above an adjacent pine-wood forest ; let the house be an ivied castle, with its old hereditary trees and ancient walks across which deer are stalking ; let the rock be one on which the broken, jagged trunk of a decaying tree is standing by the side of a river, and near which is an old log cabin in a clearing ; and let the lightning be seen against a thunder cloud sweeping along a heaving sea with a ship in distress, and then we begin to come within the limits of the properly picturesque, and we feel the difference between it and the beauty simply of some single object like a stone or a plant. There is still a unity in the scene—a unity of visual outline and perspective ; but it is a unity which embraces, or which may embrace, a wide range of vision, a well-marked diversity in objects, and which may have many angularities and much that is wild and rough in appearance. In fact, the wildness and roughness, the ruggedness of feature, is usually supposed to be one of the main characteristics, perhaps we might say *the* main characteristic, of the distinctively picturesque. Old houses, old castles, old trees, prominent headlands, overhanging cliffs and caves, great rocks, and woods, and wild waves, cascades, and streaming hair, and violent gestures, and animals associated

with mountain fastnesses, and the like, are the things which it embraces ; and one of the main problems in connection with it is to account for the fact of an attractiveness and beauty in *imperfection and decay*.

Why should old houses, and old trees, and other such things, be more attractive to the painter and the man of aesthetic taste than those which are new and fresh ?

But the consideration of the question may be postponed for a moment till we notify another aspect of the picturesque which is involved in facts already specified. Take the books of picturesque scenery in any country, or visit any picture gallery or exhibition of paintings, or look at the pictures which you may have in the room beside you, or which you may see in the shop windows as you pass along the streets of our towns, and consider what is usually found in the landscape represented—in the scenes which you would naturally call picturesque. Invariably, we may say, some sign of *animation* past or present, some form of *life or of motion*. There is some old house, or tree, or tumble-down wall ; some boat or a bridge ; some man, or woman, or child ; some beast or bird ; some glimpse of water—of lake, or sea, or running stream ; and more than likely a combination of such objects—trees, and water, and house, and human being, and beast or bird besides. In a picture which is before me as I write, and which certainly comes within the class we are speaking of, there are all these things, and more too, in beautiful arrangement and perspective ; and the longer one looks at the scene the better one likes it. There is the meeting in it of the past and the present and the distant, of the living and the dead, with the boundless beyond of the mountains and sky ; and the whole thing is provocative of thought—full of suggestion—and the effect is happy.

But remove all trace of human agency and sign of human life, and with these too all animal life, and every sign of water, and you destroy at a stroke the hope of the landscape painter by depriving him of almost everything that would make his pictures effective. And that not merely, as it might be supposed, because you would take away nearly everything that could be painted, but chiefly *because you would remove with life and motion the great elements of human interest and passion*. Let house or wall remain while you divest them if possible of all relation to human history, and they would be of no more interest to you than a bank of sand. Let animals be painted, but let them be such as you know nothing of in name, or history, or habits, and their effect in a picture would be *nil*. Let there be water, but throw out all idea of it except such as you might have of a stagnant pool where no life, or even ripple by the wind, has appeared, or fleeting shadow, and you might as well have a likeness of a sea of mud.

Motion, life, animation, and above all human affection and reason in their results, or as embodied in the person, are undoubtedly some of the chief factors in the picturesque; and, without the idea of life in manifestation, of growth and decay with all the emotions and memories and anticipations which they may awaken, it is more than questionable perhaps whether we would have any interest at all in what is now called, and enjoyed as, the picturesque. There is mingling always somehow in our thoughts and perceptions of it our own affections and feelings. We like this or that in a landscape, or picture, or description, not only because of what it is immediately to the eye, but also because it is suggestive of some experience or interest of

our own which is conceived at the same time *as common to humanity*. And hence the effectiveness of ruin and decay in landscape and painting. They intensify our feeling of existence and the mystery of being by dreams of life gone by in contrast and comparison with the possibilities of the present. They present us in imagination with an *accumulation* of experiences and possibilities of action—*with the idea of animation manifoldly multiplied*. They give scope for the imagination: they give rise to reverie. Their beauty is largely in their suggestiveness: not only in what they present to the eye, but in what they yield to the mind in imaginative and kindly sympathetic moods when we feel the pulsing as it were of another heart than ours and our emotions mingling with the spirit of the universe. Their power over us is proof that our souls are not dead, but have divine capabilities still of sympathy and adoration, and that the universe is not all material, but a thing to us of thought and affection or the embodiment of the highest good.

We are evidently thus passing from things to thoughts, from qualities of matter to the beauties of the spirit; and we are beginning to perceive even more than ever how closely they are related, and how impossible it is in aesthetics as in science to make any hard separation between the material and the mental. And when we pass in advance from the picturesque to the grand and the sublime, we enter more deeply still into the region of symbol and expression, into the realm of the spiritual in which we are haunted for ever by the eternal mind. Mountains, and sky, and sea, and space, and time by their very vastness and by way of seeming contradiction bring to our lips the question, is there

anything great but mind? and we are made to realize the strength of the position of those who would assert that "grandeur is found, originally and properly, in qualities of mind; that it is discerned in objects of sense only by reflection, as the light we perceive in the moon and planets is truly the light of the sun; and that those who look for grandeur in mere matter seek the living among the dead."¹

But though they have hitherto been confounded in our Scottish metaphysical speculations, we would make a distinction between grandeur and sublimity. There are scenes and objects which, though vast, or bold and rugged in outline, do not yet produce in us that overpowering feeling of awe and yet of exaltation which is properly characteristic of the sublime; and there are objects which in one set of circumstances, or at one stage of mental development or culture, may be sublime, and which at another stage of development or culture, or in another set of circumstances, may be merely grand, or, less than that, not even admirable, perhaps ridiculous. I stand amid the hills in the dead of the night when men are asleep, and when nothing is to be heard but the murmuring of distant streamlets, or it may be an occasional drowsy drone of beetle (which intensifies the silence by making it audible); and as I gaze into the heavens with their stars I am awed, made speechless for the moment, but having a feeling also of exaltation with a sense of the mystery of things around me. But let me stand on the very same spot in the broad light of day and look into the same heavens, in hearing of the same streams, and with

¹ Reid *On the Intellectual Powers*, essay viii., c. 3.

the same insect and animal sounds around me, and in ordinary circumstances the impression will most likely be comparatively trivial. It may be impossible for me for the time to have any realization of the sublime; and the impression will likely be that of the picturesque, or of a grandeur in which there may be the main external features for the realization of the sublime *in other circumstances and with other moods*. For it is not the heavens by themselves, nor even the midnight heavens with their stars, that are sublime, or that yield the impression of sublimity; these by themselves may to trivial souls, or to the souls of the best and most mystical among us in our trifling moods, be as void of significance or power of impression as mere emptiness in the abstract; it is the starry heavens with the enveloping darkness and its pressure of life's mystery—its infinite possibilities of change, of joy, and of woe, and a real, though dim and undefined, sense

“Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”¹

And so too with time, and space, and power, and other things through which the emotion of sublimity is realized. It is not “simply their vastness,” their “enormous extension,” or their “enormous power”² that constitutes sublimity. Vastness, in extension,

¹ Wordsworth, lines composed above Tintern Abbey.

² Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, second edition, pp. 26-27.

or protension, carried even to infinity, has no more sublimity in itself than a void or blackness simply, and is no more capable of producing the emotion. Time past and time future, or the inclusive notion of eternity, *in abstraction from the things and beings which are therein* with all their implied and related thoughts and feelings and spiritual possibilities, would be no more in itself, and would have no more power over us than a big O. It is because time carries with it, by implication and in correlation, the idea of an historical development of life and spirit¹ with its involved manifoldness of antagonism and peace, because it bears with it by implication and in correlation the world such as we find it to be in present experience, and memory, and expectation, religiously, socially, and in every other way, that it has any power to make us stand in awe, feeling glory in the soul. It is because it bears with it the idea of the world with the things that are therein, and all the ideas which we have of God and of man, of life and of death both here and hereafter. And so too with space, and power, and thunder, and lightning, and hurricane, and ocean, and forest, and the like. It is not these things by themselves that are sublime, *but these with all their implications and their correlations in thought and experience to ourselves and to the world.* Each of them may be the *occasion* outwardly of our realizing the emotion of the sublime, and so we may naturally call them sublime; but no visible scene is in itself sublime: ²

¹ "In the inmost core of its essence awe would seem to be a *personal* feeling, one which only a personality, or the imagination of a personality, can produce." —Canon Rawlinson on "The Religious Teachings of the Sublime and Beautiful in Nature" in *Present Day Tracts*, p. 11.

² Kant's *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, Buch ii., sect. 23.

it is at best only a factor or element of sublimity, the chief elements being those of humanity and Deity, historical and spiritual. I stand, for example, beside Niagara rapids, or in the midst of a storm at sea. There is a tremendous rush and roar of waters; and if I can stand without fear of the possible consequences to my life and liberty, and gaze upon the scene in silence, I may be hushed into awe and lost in reverie, and coming to myself again, I may say, It's sublime. But the state of mind in which I realized the sublimity was one in which the outward aspects of the scene were lost for the time in the thoughts and feelings which the scene inspired of a Power and Presence which was greater still—of a “something far more deeply interfused” of which we have already spoken. The state was one in which I lost all distinct perception of outwardness and materiality in the realization of the spiritual and divine and the identification of myself for the moment with it. And so, as I have said, there is not only the emotion of *awe*, but also that of *exaltation*; not only, as at the *inception* of the emotion of sublimity, the feelings of our littleness and helplessness amid the forces of nature with its infinities and eternities, but also, at the moment of completest absorption, *the practical annulment and abolition of the material and external* in the rise of the spiritual when “all things are under us.”

“ In such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours.”¹

¹ Wordsworth's *Prelude*, book vi.

Material things and objects may be grand, but they are never of themselves sublime; and as little are space, and time, and eternity, and power great or small. There is *no* sublime of extension or protension, nor of intension either we might say. All such divisions fail as applying only to bleak and barren abstractions; and being quantitative rather than qualitative, they are wholly misleading, and are felt to be impertinences in face of the fact.

We need hardly say that the same thing is true of art as of nature. It is not the picture, the poem, the statue, or the music of itself that is sublime; but these with what they suggest or give rise to in thought of the might and general capabilities of spirit which is one in man and God. And so we find that what is sublime to one is not at all to another, and that what gives rise to the emotion at one time in ourselves does not do so at another. It depends upon our moods and surroundings, our expectations and experiences, our culture and our reading, our imaginative power and hereditary bias, etc. And, as we might expect, children as a general rule have no proper sense of the sublime, and as little has the savage as the lowest type of man, or, if they may be said to have some such sense of things, it is in the merest embryo stage of it, like that of a dog which may be attracted by a head above ground when the body is hid, or by a moving umbrella, and yet afraid to approach it. Standing on a battlefield without knowing it, we may feel it to be all commonplace and tame; but, let the light of a full historical knowledge dawn on the soul, and then, with bared head, we may be ready, like Jacob when he awoke from his dream, to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it

not. . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”¹ And so, with the development of knowledge, and especially of the emotions and the religious sentiment through the ages, there has been a corresponding development of the sense of sublimity; and we, in this latest age and in Christian countries, being delivered from fear through Christianity and science and enlarged commerce and travel, are drawn to scenes and places from which those in earlier ages would have shrunk in horror and trembling. For crag and cave are not haunted as of yore, and woods, from which beasts and robbers and the like have fled, are no longer “savage.” We have no fear of the devil in storms, nor in rugged, lonely lands, nor on desolate shores, and we are left in freedom to enjoy them. Witches and warlocks and dryads and hamadryads are visions of the past; or, if we have still a remnant of the belief in their existence in the “eeriness” of the lonely dell and haunted castle or chamber, they are fast disappearing from our view, and with them much that hindered the enjoyment of nature’s grandeur and the rise of the emotion of the sublime in the soul. No one with the visions of Tam o’ Shanter would be in the least likely to enjoy at the time the scenery round “Alloway’s auld haunted kirk,” or any other kirk or castle. Fear is hostile to the perception of the sublime—not the main element of the emotion, as has been supposed, but antagonistic to it; and with the process of disenchantment of grove and field and forest and flood, and a rising disbelief in witchcraft, and all that kind of thing, through the perception of the unity of nature and the permanence of law, there has been

¹Genesis xxviii. 16-17.

a growing delight in landscape and natural scenery for its own sake, and a deepening of our sense of sublimity through the intensification of our humanity in Christ.

There is another point to be noted in any true analysis of the emotion of the sublime. It seems to be implied in it that we have got rid for the moment, though it may not be permanently in our theological creed, of the idea of *caprice* or *cruelty* in that "Something far more deeply interfused" with which we come into contact—that we have risen for the time in emotion and imagination to the grasp of It as at least a power beneficent and morally pure. For not only are we not afraid of It, not only do we not want to escape from It, we rejoice to abide with It, and we want nothing to interfere with or disturb a mood so blessed. It is good for us to be there; and all irritability, and noise-making, and unkindness, and immorality are felt to be out of accord with time and place, and we are left, when we withdraw, with kindlier hearts, and with the glow, though it may be but momentary, of a nobler moral enthusiasm.

We have referred to a difference between the object or event that may *occasion* or *give rise to* the emotion of the sublime and *what actually constitutes the sublime* in thought, and the distinction between them may easily be seen by a reference to some simple illustrations. The ticking of a clock in broad daylight, and when we are full of business, is a trivial enough sound; and, when taken by itself, and in abstraction from everything else, it is as trivial by night as by day. There is nothing in the sound itself, that is to say, that is in any way sub-

lime, any more than there is in the dripping of water from the eaves of a house in the sunshine of a winter's morning. But in certain moods, and with certain surroundings and experiences, either of those sounds may give rise to the emotion of sublimity as powerfully as the starry sky, or mighty cataract, or the broad expanse of ocean or of prairie. It was felt so by Longfellow when he wrote "The Old Clock on the Stairs"; and anyone who can enter into the spirit of the poem may have the same experience to-day or at any time.

"From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding night;
There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in his shroud of snow;
And, in the hush that followed the prayer,
Was heard the old clock on the stair,—
 'For ever—never!
 Never—for ever!'

All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
'Ah! when shall they all meet again?'
As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—
 'For ever—never,
 Never—for ever!'

It was not the sound by itself, but what the sound gave rise to in recollection of life's varied scenes and changes, and the thoughts of eternity with its endless possibilities of life to be which it carried with it in suggestion, that stirred the poet's soul and moved him to write as he did. "*L'éternité*," he was thinking, "*est une pendule, dont le balancier dit et redit sans cesse ces deux mots seulement, dans*

le silence des tombeaux : Toujours ! jamais ! jamais ! Toujours !” And so with the slow drip of water in the silence of a solitary cell or cave, or the rumbling of a cart which may be mistaken for thunder (to take the illustration which Jeffrey turns to ridicule), or the hooting of the owl, or any other sound or sight—it is not these things in themselves that are sublime, but these *with what they carry in thought* of all that is most solemn in life and life’s possibilities when endlessly continued and embraced in the Divine.

It is not to be thought, however, nor are we to be understood as saying, that we distinctly realize all that is contained in the emotion at the time we experience it. The content may be there without being consciously thought of—there as in dreamland and in vague capability like the powers that may have come by inheritance from the past : and we may obtain it by analysis and perceive by reflection that it is involved in our experience, though people in general may never once have asked themselves the question, What is sublimity ? nor How is it constituted ? nor Why is it that we are capable of realizing it ? And it has also to be noted that while, by the account which we have given of it, we would make the sublime like the beautiful a thing of relativity, we do not deprive it of an outward reality, nor do we confound, as is commonly done, the *emotion* with the *perception* of sublimity or *the sublime itself*. The sublime is relative, but not unreal, and not a wandering fancy of the brain nor a fleeting emotion merely. A child may have no perception of it, nor may a savage, nor may the embruted and uneducated in civilized communities, nor may any of us in particular moods ; but life for all that is a real thing, and the

world has had a history, and men have come and gone, and there is a future ahead of us and a God within and over us in whom "we live and move and have our being," and these are the main elements and factors of the sublime, and it has as much of an existence in consequence as they have, and is in every way as real and as permanent a possibility of emotion. If it has an existence only in and to thought, so has the universe, and so has everything that we can think or speak of; and if it is embraced in spirit, so are they—nature and all material things that are usually accounted real in distinction from the unreal in individual feeling, fancy, or opinion. There is the *sublime*, and there is the *emotion of the sublime*; and these are no more to be confounded than is the universe with the sensations which it may stir within me through this man or that, or by the rod which may strike me. So persistently, however, have philosophers identified the sublime with the emotion of the sublime that we have discussions nowadays on "The origin of the sublime"¹ as if it were merely a psychological phenomenon! But the genesis of the emotion, or of the perception, of the sublime is no more to be confounded with the sublimity perceived or the sublime itself than is the development of the mind of a baby with the evolution of the cosmos. There is a difference to be observed between psychology and astronomy, but the difference is not greater than that between "the origin of the sublime" and the origin and development of our perception of the sublime. And it is of the latter that Grant Allen treats under the title of the former.

But while there is no real excuse for identifying emotion with what has caused it, nor sensation with

¹ *Mind*, July, 1878.

perception and thought, we can yet easily perceive how men should be tempted to regard the sublime as wholly subjective, or a thing of individual perception or opinion, like a dream and vision of the night, and especially when they trace, as Grant Allen has done, the development of the sense of the sublime through the changing opinions and theories through the ages about the gods and their actions and relations to the world. We do not now believe in the deification of our ancestors, nor in the gods of Greece and Rome. Jupiter and Juno, and their other Olympic majesties have disappeared like nightmares when men awake in the broad light of day ; and if these were but as idle fancies, wholly subjective in origin and end, how could the sublimity that was perceived in connection with them be other than subjective too ? Could it have more of reality and outward existence than the objects with which it was identified ? And the answer is, surely it could not. But a dream does not prove the world unreal, nor abolish life with its mysteries of joy and pain, but implies them both in distinction from itself as a dream ; and Jupiter and Co., as dreams of the world's youth, were but faint and distorted images of the Divine reality which underlies, supports, and exceeds all temporal projections of it. And the sublimity (if it was ever properly realized at all in the case, which we may doubt) was not in the image, or form of the god conceived, but in the power and reality of life which it represented and suggested, or implied, and which was felt for the moment to embrace and control the individual who adored or stood in awe. No form of a god, and no action of a god, any more than a mountain or a tumbling sea, is in itself sublime. The sublime, like the Christian's God who is Spirit, is

unpicturable; but, like Him too, and in union with Him, it is very real in this or that individual, in the rise and fall of families, tribes, and nations, and in the history of the cosmos material and spiritual. Deprive us of the conviction of an external Something—Something which we have not made, and cannot produce nor control, but of which rather we, with other things visible, are the outcome and product—before which we stand in awe, and where would be our emotion of the sublime? Where the gun would be of which we had destroyed the stock, lock, and barrel, or the vision when there was no eye to see and nothing to be seen. There is here in combination the subjective and the objective, the awe-inspiring and the awe-inspired, and either of them without the other in thought is like the stick with only one end—an impossibility.

There is one other point, and then the chapter is finished. Our perception of the sublime is not the result of association merely in the individual or through the race—as if the sublime itself might still be the projection of our imagination and the perception of it an illusion—but of an increased power of interpretation of what is given us to read in the facts of the universe around us; and we are going on to discover—not that there are a few things only before which we may rationally stand in awe,¹ but—that there is nothing, we might say, however apparently insignificant, which does not involve the infinities, and which may not give rise in a meditative soul to the sense of sublimity and the

¹ “The sublime in nature is, no doubt, comparatively speaking, rare. It does not meet us, as beauty does, at every turn. It derives some of its power to move us from its (comparatively) infrequent manifestation.”—Canon Rawlinson's *Tract on the Religious Teaching of the Sublime and Beautiful in Nature*, p. 14.

presence of God. "To me," says Wordsworth, "to me the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."¹ And Tennyson but utters a thought towards which science leads us, or rather, we may say, which science embraces, when, looking like Wordsworth at a flower, he says to it—

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies ;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."²

And so we might say of every atom, and of the hairs of our head which are "all numbered." And to the devout man of science there may be a sublimity in the sands of the shore, as there is in the dust of the dead to us all; and that for a similar reason, because, like the dust of the dead, they have had a history, and yield in continuity and correlation the life of the world and the life divine—a growing mystery to growing knowledge. For knowledge does not abolish mystery, but, like the microscope and with it, brings it nearer and makes it all-surrounding like the atmosphere and ether. And to-day we need not look to heaven for God, though He is there, nor stand by thundering cataract or roaring sea to feel the pulsing of His life in realized sublimity. The light revealed by spectro-scope and prism is enough for that. The sighing of the wind, the song of the brook, the snatch of a song, the sight of a picture, the sound of organ or piano—the most trifling accident or object outwardly may

¹ "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality."

² "The Higher Pantheism."

lead us to cleave the illusions of sense and time, and all the broad distinctions of the natural and the supernatural, and carry us into the presence and grasp of the Eternal, when our souls are awed in silence and we want nothing to break the blessedness of our union and communion for the moment with Him who is the All in all.

“ O joy, that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers,
What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions : not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be bless'd—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast;

Not for these I raise

The songs of thanks and praise ;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;
Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised !

But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,

Which be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;

Uphold us—cherish—and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence : truths that wake

To perish never ;

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,

Nor man, nor boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy !

Hence in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither ;
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”¹

Mountain heights and vastness are no more to some in the revelation of the sublime than atoms ; for the godlike is in the little as well as in the great, and spirit is more than space and time. The universe is one of which we might say that the life of the whole is in every part.

¹ Wordsworth's "Ode."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS.

THERE is a passage in Mozley's famous sermon on Nature which is worth quoting, and with which we may appropriately begin the present chapter. "The beauty of nature," he says, "is not, as it were, a fortunate accident, which can be separated from her use ; there is no difference in the tenure upon which these two characteristics stand ; the beauty is just as much a part of nature as the use ; they are only different aspects of the self-same facts. Take a gorgeous sunset ; what is the substance of it ? Only a combination of atmospheric laws and laws of light and heat ; the same laws by which we are enabled to live, see, and breathe. But the solid means of life constitute also a rich sight ; the usefulness on one side is on the other beauty. It is not that the mechanism is painted over, in order to disguise the deformity of the machinery, but the machinery is itself the painting ; the useful laws compose the spectacle. All the colours of the landscape, the tints of spring and autumn, the hues of twilight and the dawn—all that might seem the superfluities of nature, are only her most necessary operations under another view ; her ornament is but another aspect of her work ; and in the very act of labouring as a machine, she also sleeps as a picture. So in the sphere of space—the

same lines which serve as the measure of distance, to regulate all our motions, also make the beauty of perspective."

The beauty of nature, he says, is not an accident; and it is to the idea that it does not exist as a thin veneering simply, or only as an appearance superficially, but enters into the very essence and make of things in such a way that we might about as well think of a time when there will be *just nothing at all* as of a time when beauty shall entirely cease to be, that we want emphatically to direct attention in this chapter. It is a feature of beauty which, as we conceive, has never been sufficiently attended to.

Forgetting then for the time that any question has been raised as to the outward reality of beauty, and speaking in the language of ordinary every-day life, let us go on to think for a while how all-pervasive it is. For where is it not to be found? We look out and abroad upon the landscape, and we see hill and valley, with their trees and open fields, all clothed in green, and shouting to us in their youthful gladness and freshness of looks; and language, we may think, is all too tame to express the feelings which for the moment stir us. The things we see absorb us; they are altogether lovely. Or we cast our eyes to the ground, and there, in garden or in field, by the open highway, or along the narrow paths of the woods, we are appealed to by every blade of grass and those mute messengers of God, the flowers, both wild and tame, in every part perfection. And butterfly and bird with twittering song, and tender lamb in its season, are all of them beautiful to behold. And so with all the fulness of summer, with its teeming life, its dancing fire-flies' gleam, its rising and its setting suns. And so with

the golden autumn and its many-coloured leaves and general ripeness. And so in icy winter with its wreathing snows and frostwork on the window-panes. And so too, finally, when we gaze into "the great and wide sea wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts." "Who can describe these wonderful gardens of the deep on which we now gazed through ten and twenty fathoms of crystal water? Who can enumerate or describe the strange creatures moving about and darting hither and thither amid the masses of coral forming their submarine home? There were shells of rare shape, brighter than if they had been polished by the hand of the most skilful artist; crabs of all sizes, scuttling and sidling along; sea anemones, spreading their delicate feelers in search of prey; zoophytes of many other kinds crawling slowly over the reef; and scarlet, blue, yellow, gold, violet, spotted, striped, and winged fish, short, long, pointed, and blunt, of the most varied shapes, darting about like birds among the coral trees."¹ For "coral of every variety, of every shape, of every hue, is seen intermingled in rich profusion, presenting to the imagination the idea of a submarine flower-garden or shrubbery of exquisite beauty; while among the tortuous branches of the madreporæ, and wide-spreading leaves of other corals, the zebra-fish, and others of every colour and size, are seen gamboling in conscious security."²

✕ But beauty is not spread over the landscape merely like a varnish superficially. It goes down deep into the very heart and essence of things, as we have said, and into the laws of their formation. A tree in full

¹ Mrs. Brassey's *Voyage in the "Sunbeam,"* c. 14.

² William's *Missionary Enterprises,* c. 2.

foliage may be beautiful, and so with a rose in its colouring. But examine the structure of the rose, and you will find beauty in it, in every part of stem and leaf. Cut the tree, and you will see that there has been law and order in its formation. There is beauty in the heart of it, and all through it. It is inherent in its structure—in the very laws of its growth. Or go down to the inorganic world, into the very centre of the earth, if you like, and you will find it very much the same there—in the earth as a whole, and in each individual part of it. There is a beauty in the order of the strata, and “a certain vein of thrift runs through the apparent prodigality. Nature is never in a hurry, and seems to have had always before her the adage, ‘Keep a thing long enough, and you will find a use for it.’”¹ And now take a stone or a grain of sand. If you examine them closely you will find beauty there.

“For the world was built in order,
And the atoms march in tune.”²

Yes; and the atoms themselves, like the monads of Leibnitz, are worlds in miniature, manifestations of beauty as of wisdom and power. They look, as we have been told, “like manufactured articles.”

And now go again to the side of river or lake or sea. Watch the movements of their waters, the lines of ripple on their surface, the bubbles which they form, their eddyings and heavings in obedience to law, and all will admit that there is beauty there.³ It is the

¹ Huxley, “On the Formation of Coal,” in *Critiques and Addresses*.

² Emerson’s *Monadnoc*.

³ Figure 10 in Tyndall’s second lecture on Light might here be given in illustration.

same when we take up a handful and dash it on the rock. It rolls off into balls, each perfect in its way, and every drop reflecting a world. And more than that; there is a beauty in the very *splash* of every rain-drop.¹ And there is a music in its sound, and in the song of every brook. And how does it reach us, that song? By the rippling waves of atmosphere, which, if made visible, would be as pleasant to the eye as the sound is to the ear. And to help us to understand that, we may think of the landscape "winking through the heat," or the quivering movements visible in the air over a glowing surface. Well, they are all beautiful to see; and had we ears acute enough to catch them in sound, we would no doubt have a corresponding beauty from them in music. And they are but an illustration of what the atmosphere is throughout—in motion. In fact, we are breathing in a great aerial sea, with its eddyings and waves and currents like those of the visible ocean; and, could we visualize its movements, we would see them beautiful throughout as we see the movements over the heated surface.

"For nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,

¹"As usually seen, a drop of water falling from a height of ten or twelve inches on a smooth, solid substance, such as glass or wood, seems to make an indiscriminate splash. . . . But if the mark made by a drop of milk or mercury on a finely-divided surface of lamp-black be examined after the drop has rolled away, it will be found to consist of delicate concentric rings, with numberless fine radial striae where the smoke has been swept away. . . . The marks thus made are very beautiful and symmetrical; and it will be found, if the glass be uniformly smoked, that the same sized drops of the same liquid falling from the same height will produce almost exactly similar marks; while if the height be changed, the mark on the lamp-black will be somewhat changed; and it is a fair inference, if each drop makes almost exactly the same complicated, symmetrical mark, that the splash of each drop takes place in almost exactly the same way."—A. M. Worthington, *Nature*, June 28, 1877, p. 165.

Whether she works in land or sea,
Or hide underground her alchemy.
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oars forsake."¹

But yet again. Let us lift our eyes to the heavens by day or at night. See how the wind-swept clouds, in constant motion, pile themselves architecturally in spotless masses of white, or lie apparently in peaceful lines against the blue of a summer's evening sky and edged, it may be, with an "intolerable radiance" by the light of the descending sun. There is more than beauty there, there is glory in them—an intensity of beauty which we may feel and see, but cannot utter. And there is beauty too in the simple blue with its thousands of stars. And their light, let us remember, has come to us by an ether, the medium of communication between all worlds known, which is all atremble, and in which wave passes over wave of light, hurrying on in checker work of beauty through infinity. And each world from which that light has come has been found to be of material like our own, and it has gone through, or is going through, a history like our own. So that in each there is the beauty more or less of our own repeated. It is inherent there as here. And, finally, we have to think of all planets and systems of worlds as moving in relations of mathematical exactness, and keeping time and tune—a system of interlations of beauty and sublimity extending to infinity.

But there is more than even an infinity of extension, or mere boundlessness of matter in one direction to be

¹ Emerson's *Poems*: Woodnotes.

taken into account in this relation. There is also, as suggested by the two preceding paragraphs, an infinite of intensity and complexity in connection with what is directly to be perceived by man as he is. It is only the dulness of our ears that prevents our hearing a music in the woods from the circulation of the juices of the trees,¹ or of the grass beneath our feet, or, for that matter, in the dullest of clods when under the action of light and at any time. So much, it may be said, has been discovered by experiment; but it might have been predicted from previous speculations. For if all matter is in motion, as we have long been told, there was likely also to have been a music in the motion. And now we may hear, not only the tread of a fly a mile or more away, but also the fall of a shadow or a ray of light; and that gives us the thought of the whole of the heavens and the interspaces of all worlds as filled with music to other ears than ours, and of the worlds themselves, in their motion, as singing, "still quiring to young-eyed cherubin." And so microphone and photophone, and other like instruments, have given a reality to what might otherwise have seemed a mere poetic fancy.

"O the one life within us and abroad
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;

¹ Professor Huxley, if we remember aright, speaks, in his article on "The Physical Basis of Life," of our hearing in the woods, if our ears were unstopped, "the roar as of a mighty maelstrom," or in words to that effect. Well, it would altogether depend on the degree of our supposed increase of sensibility to sound whether we might hear a "roar" or a song as of a brook. But it would not need such a quickening of our powers to hear a song as a roar where now we hear no sound at all.

Where the breeze warbles and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument." ¹

The "music of the spheres" is thus assuming more of the aspect of reality than of mere poetic fable: and we have to think of a beauty to ear and to eye behind and within what is directly perceptible to our unaided senses. For not only may we think of a music in motion, in the trembling even of the luminiferous ether as well as in the movements of vegetable life, we have also to think of a gradation of colours beyond the ultra-violet of the spectroscope, and of at least a probable "radiant matter" ² which may reflect and refract them in hues now unknown, but as numerous, perhaps, and more delicate than those our present visible world gives us. And with that thought there also comes up at once in imagination worlds of life of varied beauty infinite beyond our present ken. In short, not only has the microscope revealed to us world within world, as we say, and life within life, which had once been unthought of; but we are reaching also the conception through science—a conception which ought not to be strange to believers in revelation—that world may interpenetrate world, the more spiritual the more material; and that what we know and perceive as solid matter may be only as empty space to other orders of intelligent creatures in our midst, though unperceived. And of course with the thought of such a complexity of worlds comes also the thought of a corresponding complexity of beauties and sublimities within the depths and heights and inter-lacements of them.

¹ Coleridge's Poems, "The Eolian Harp."

² "On Radiant Matter." By William Crookes, F.R.S. A lecture before the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Sheffield, August 22, 1879.

And then, to go still nearer the foundations of things, we find, as already suggested, that, from the atom upwards, the universe, in accordance with the Pythagorean idea, is built in number and proportion, and that its laws exist as mathematical relations. The proportions in which the elements will unite are "definite and constant, a given compound always consisting of the same proportions." The law of the correlation of heat and gravitation admits of precise numerical expression; and the song of every brook and bird may be reduced to the scale of harmony. Every crystal is a geometrical growth; and, in the development of the organism, the cell-cleavage adheres to a rhythm which, in the original or primordial egg-cleavage, advances in regular geometrical progression (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and so on).¹ The pistils of each flower are numbered, and so are the spots on moth and butterfly and bird. The law of gravitation, by which the worlds are ruled, is a definite numerical law, and the return of even comets can be certainly foretold. They move, though wanderers, in time and tune; and everything, like the tides and seasons, has its law and course of action and recurrence. And such laws of formation, of action, and of reproduction and progression, involve the beautiful and give rise to it externally.

We have much, however, still to take into account. We have been looking abroad upon creation in its length and breadth, its depth and height, and in its complexity of make; but, in doing so, we have been overlooking some of its leading features and one of the most important factors certainly in it, the constructive skill of insect, viz., of bird and of beast, and of man above all in his emotional, intellectual, moral, and

¹ Haeckel's *Evolution of Man*, vol. i., c. 7.

spiritual nature ; in short, we have been overlooking the fact of an *onlooker* who is also himself a *ποιητής* or maker of things that are fair. A spider may not be one of the prettiest of things to look upon with the naked eye ; but it can construct a web most beautiful in its symmetry and with the most perfect calculations for strength in the material used. The bee makes its comb with mathematical exactness ; and it is thought also that, like other insects, it has a perception of colours and a liking for those that are fair, that in fact it has been one of the agents for improving the colouring of flowers through the ages. Birds are beautiful in form and colour, and perhaps they know it ; and the eggs of many are a marvel to behold. But their nests are also marvels of constructive skill. Of the rudest materials for the most part, they are yet objects of wonder for compactness, and beauty, and fitness for the end contemplated. And there is this in it to be specially noted now, that the nest is not like our works, "prepared from a model, which settles the plan and conducts and regulates the labour. Here the conception is so thoroughly *in* the artist, the idea so clearly defined, that without frame or carcase, without preliminary support, the aerial ship is built up piece by piece, and not a hitch disturbs the ensemble. All adjusts itself exactly, symmetrically, in perfect harmony ; a thing infinitely difficult in such deficiency of tools in this rude effort of concentration and kneading by the mere pressure of the breast."¹ And while it may be doubted whether the bird has any proper idea of the meaning of it all, it can hardly be doubted that it has a choice in the selection of the material and a perception of its colouring. Any one who has observed

¹ *The Bird*. By Jules Michelet.

the assimilation of the nest of the chaffinch, say, to the tree on which it is built, and who thinks of the endless diversity of material at hand, will be constrained, I think, to grant so much. But even if he should not, and if he should think of the bird as moving blindly in accordance with the directive skill of an agent higher than itself, it matters not for our purpose. The taste, the skill, is there displayed in a construction of beauty as natural in its way as the growing corn or the purpling east.

Among four-footed animals we do not find such marked instances of nice constructive and artistic skill as in bird and insect; but there also, in their burrowing and their "homes without hands," we find in some instances the most cunning adjustment of means to ends. To say nothing of the beaver and the mole and such like creatures, nothing almost could exceed, for instance, the cunning construction, in like material, of the nest of the common wild gray rabbit. Making a hole of about an arm's length in a field that has been ploughed, say, and there depositing her young in a bed of the softest down pulled from her own body, she will, when leaving them, close up the entrance to them entirely, so that neither cold nor keen-scented enemy is likely to find them. How she can do it without leaving tracks enough behind her at the spot to lead to their discovery by man is a mystery; but so it is. All is level and like the rest of the field, and it is only by the merest accident that one is likely to find them. But as they grow older and need more air to prevent suffocation during the long time that she must be absent, a little bit of a hole is left open, and that is made larger by degrees

until her young are ready to escape with her to the ordinary burrows of their elders. Now, there is not much beauty, it may be, in what is to be seen by the eye in the facts and the process of working which we have thus described ; but there is a beauty in the nice adjustment of relations that must be thought of as entering into the work ; and, what is more, there must be some perception of them by the animal which does the work. And in the same line of thought and illustration we have all the truth that there may be in the doctrine of sexual selection throughout the animal world. There is implied in it generally some perception of beauty of species and an appreciation of the points that make for progress.

It is when we come to man, however, that we find in greatest distinctness, and most undoubtedly, a conscious perception and appreciation and production of beauty and of things that are beautiful in all their lines and spheres of thought and existence, from the varied phases of earth and sky to the sublimity of the moral law and the higher heights of holiness and love. It is found in all the arts and sciences, and in all the laws involved in them. It lies at the very roots of language, and runs through the growth of it all. And the more we advance the more of beauty we perceive and enjoy. Delight in things beautiful is one of the earliest and most universal emotions of our humanity. We see it in the child of only a few weeks old. We see how a bright colour will attract it ; and how, as it grows, it grows into the perception and love of things that are pretty. It wants to have such things about it, and to get a hold of them and call

them its own. And so with the lowest tribes—the most savage of men. They seem all to be pleased with trinkets and jewellery. They may be innocent of clothes; but they are likely to have some ornament to the person in beads, or nose-jewels, in painting or tattooing of the body. They may bear nothing but a war-club; but that is likely to be cut and carved in such a way as will show at least the first faint glimmerings of a taste for things that are fair and lovely. Their taste may not be the same as ours in degree; but they have their likings and dislikings for the looks of things, their preferences and aversions for different forms and colours. They distinguish between the appearances of objects; and their preferences, like those of children, are likely to be for things that are bright and gaudy.

And delight in things beautiful does not die out with childhood and barbarity. But on the contrary, as we have said, the more we are developed and cultured the more do people demand that all things around and within them shall be harmonious and fair. They may change in their choice of things and colours; but it is in the way of advance and of better taste—of higher beauty. And as they rise from childhood bodily and spiritual, they call not merely for the outward adorning of the person, but for beauty in their homes and surroundings,^x for pleasantness of demeanour in their social habits and customs, for honourable conduct and pure morality generally, and for chasteness and beauty in the expression of their intellectual and religious convictions and sympathies. And the more we advance in our growth towards a perfect manhood, the more do we

see that beauty in these things is not merely a superficial colouring which might be rubbed off, as it were, without much actual injury, but that it is of the real essence of the thing itself, and that it exists in proportion to the intensity and fulness and force of the character exhibited. The beauty of morality, say, is not in the mere appearance of the thing, but in the reality of it and in the intensity and fulness of its existence. Men, however, are advancing but slowly towards the perception of a beauty in moral and spiritual life. They are not cultured yet in that direction—not cultured enough to delight generally in moral beauty and to choose it as the aim and effort of their lives. On the whole, the most advanced of Christian nations are as yet but poorly developed indeed towards the perception of the beauty of holiness. Still, with all the ebbing and the flowing of the tidal waves of life, there seems to be a progress upwards through the centuries, and our thoughts are “widening with the process of the suns.”

And now let us ask, what bearing have such facts on the question we have been discussing? They would seem to imply, as we have said, that beauty is not spread over the landscape like a thin veneering simply which might be rubbed off at any time, and that it is not the result of pleasurable associations merely in the individual or in the race, but that it enters into the very make and constitution of the universe, being inseparable from its forces and the laws by which they work, so that our perceptions of it, whether by association or otherwise, should be regarded as the result of it already existing rather than as the cause of it, and that in fact all the forces

of the universe have gone to the formation of us for the perception and enjoyment of beauty developing or evolved through the ages, but which must be thought of as more or less coexistent and coextensive with material and spiritual being, or with space and time and the things and beings that are to be thought of as in them. And if there be anything behind or under the things we see and of which they are but a many-faced phenomenon, then that also must come within the sweep of our remarks, and we must say that beauty is one of the expressions or phenomena of that Unknown—that it is coextensive apparently and coexistent with it also.

But that we may not seem to be advancing too rapidly and altogether unwarrantably from a scientific point of view, let us quote from a scientific man whose works, notwithstanding our disagreement with him on some metaphysical points, have contributed more to the formation of the view we have tried to express than those of all other writers put together. Says Tyndall, at the close of his first lecture on Light, "We may profitably glance back on the web of relations which these experiments reveal to us. We have, in the first place, in solar light an agent of exceeding complexity, composed of innumerable constituents, refrangible in different degrees. We find, secondly, the atoms and molecules of bodies gifted with the power of sifting solar light in the most various ways, and producing by this sifting the colours observed in nature and art. To do this they must possess a molecular structure commensurate in complexity with that of light itself. Thirdly, we have the human eye and brain, so organized as to be able to take in and

distinguish the multitude of impressions thus generated. The light, therefore, at starting is complex; to sift and select it as they do natural bodies must be complex; while to take in the impression thus generated, the human eye and brain, however we may simplify our conceptions of their action, must be highly complex. Whence this triple complexity? If what are called material purposes were the only end to be served, a much simpler mechanism would be sufficient. But instead of simplicity, we have prodigality of relation and adaptation—and this apparently for the sole purpose of enabling us to see things robed in the splendours of colour. Would it not seem that nature harboured the intention of educating us for other enjoyments than those derivable from meat and drink? At all events, whatever nature meant—and it would be mere presumption to dogmatize as to what she meant—we find ourselves here as the upshot of her operations, endowed with capacities to enjoy not only the materially useful, but endowed with others of indefinite scope and application, which deal alone with the beautiful and the true." Yes; as the upshot of the operations of nature with her "prodigality of relation and adaptation," which are themselves more wonderful than all that is directly visible or audible, we are here endowed with capacities of "indefinite scope and application, which deal alone with the beautiful and the true"; and, with that expression of belief and of fact, does it not seem an altogether inadequate, nay, a ridiculously perverse account of the beautiful with which alone these faculties deal, to say that it is merely a thing of individual association, with about as little

external reality as a ghost in a dream, or that it is the result of the transmission of pleasurable associations through the race and the lower grades of intelligence which have preceded us in the evolutionary scale of being? There may have been an advance in the perception and appreciation of beauty through the ages, an advance which has kept pace with the evolution of the beauty to be perceived; but that advance has itself been the result of a host of relations and adaptations which involve in the thought of them a beauty already existing, and the very idea of evolution includes a series of movements analogous, say, to the forward and the backward movements of the tides of ocean or the rippling atmosphere around us and the ether waves, and all these again involve the idea, and with the idea also the perception, of a beauty existing. There is a rhythm in the evolutionary process, to say nothing of the constitution of the things evolved, which already in idea includes all that we have now around us. The process with its contents is simply our experience read backwards into time; and evolutionism, as talked of by some of its foremost advocates, might be described as Platonic Idealism inverted. At any rate, "it shows us nature as an intimate union of beauty and fitness, a pageant to the sense, a mechanism to the intellect; and, in striving to survey this mighty plan, the imagination seems to get a glimpse of the sublime truth that Cosmos realizes the poetic dream, the transitory art of God."¹

¹ *The New Truth and the Old Faith.* By a Scientific Layman, London, 1880.

But a new series of questions has been pressing upon us as we have been advancing. And the first of them is this, May we assume that the laws of nature to which we have been referring, the laws of proportion in chemistry, for instance, of geometrical progression in cell cleavage, and of the movements of the planets, are actually the laws of the things in connection with which they are spoken, and not merely our modes of conceiving of the movements or relations of those things? Are they laws which science has really *discovered in nature*, or are they only men's ideas of what they thought was there, and may we all be dreamers and idiots? Have all the boasted discoveries of science been the discoveries of only so many "mares' nests," or have our philosophers, our Newtons and our Faradays, and the like, been the wise men and seers they have been reputed to be, and have they reported what they observed, and not merely given us their own feelings and opinions and led us into scientific superstition? The questions may seem to ordinary rational minds without a meaning. But a prevalent philosophy of nescience makes them necessary; and that they are not without their reason a brief quotation or two may show. "A law of nature," says one, "being merely a generalization of relations, and *having no existence except in the mind*, is essentially intangible; and therefore, however small the law may be, it can never admit of exceptions, though its operations may admit of innumerable exceptions."¹ "For law," says another, "is *nothing more than the general conception* in which a series of similarly re-

¹ Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, vol. i., c. 1, note 32.

curing natural processes may be embraced.”¹ “The laws of nature,” says a third, “in themselves *may have no more absolute existence than parallels of latitude*. But they exist for us.”² Now if a law has “no existence except in the mind,” and is “nothing more than a general conception,” or has no more existence in relation to the universe than parallels of latitude, it is evident that it is subjective, not objective, “not a fact in external nature, nor facts, nor order in facts, nor uniformity”; and the wonder is that it should be spoken of as a law of nature at all, or that we should speak of the worlds as “governed by law,” or of the laws of chemical and vital action, of the laws of the atmosphere, of the laws of gravitation, of the laws of the planetary system, or of the laws of anything else usually deemed external. By the form of the statement in such cases we make the laws referred to *the laws of the things spoken of*, external and belonging to the physical universe, while by the definitions given, or the statements we have quoted, they have no existence except in the mind—by which, we suppose, is meant the mind of those who formulate and express them, or in general the human mind.

But while laws of nature may sometimes be spoken of as if they had an existence only in the mind, none of us can in practice, and least of all can scientists, proceed on that assumption; and, accordingly, Helmholtz, after declaring that law is nothing more than “a general conception,” goes on im-

¹ Helmholtz's *Popular Scientific Lectures*, First Series, “The Aim and Progress of Physical Science.”

² Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, p. 6.

mediately to tell us that it is a great deal more, and that it has "the form of an objective power." "A law of nature, however," he says, "is not a mere logical conception that we have adopted as a kind of *memoria technica* to enable us to more readily remember facts. We of the present day have already sufficient insight to know that the laws of nature are not things which we can evolve by any speculative method. On the contrary, we have to *discover* them in the facts; we have to test them by repeated observation or experiment, in constantly new cases, under ever-varying circumstances, and in proportion only as they hold good under a constantly increasing number of cases and with greater delicacy in the means of observation, does our confidence in their trustworthiness rise.

"Thus the laws of nature occupy the position of a power with which we are not familiar, not to be arbitrarily selected and determined in our minds, as one might devise various systems of animals and plants one after another, so long as the object is only one of classification. Before we can say that our knowledge of any one law of nature is complete we must see that *it holds good without exception*, and make this the test of its correctness. If we can be assured that the conditions under which the law operates have presented themselves, the result must ensue without arbitrariness, without choice, without our co-operation, and from the very necessity which regulates the things of the external world as well as our perception. The law then takes the form of an objective power and for that reason we call it *force*. For instance, we regard the law of refraction objectively as a refractive

force in transparent substances ; the law of chemical affinity as the elective force exhibited by different bodies towards one another. In the same way we speak of electrical force of contact of metals, of a force of adhesion, capillary force, and so on. . . . Our desire to *comprehend* natural phenomena, in other words, to ascertain their *laws*, thus takes another form of expression, that is, we have to seek out the *forces* which are the *causes* of the phenomena. The conformity to law in nature must be conceived as a causal connection the moment we recognize that it is independent of our thought and will. If then we direct our inquiry to the progress of physical science as a whole, we shall have to judge of it by the measure in which the recognition and knowledge of a causative connection embracing all natural phenomena has advanced.”¹

If that, then, may be taken as the genuinely scientific position—and, though some might object to the meaning apparently given to the word “force,” few, we suppose, will care to deny that it is—we must think of a law of nature not merely as a general conception, or as having an existence only in the mind, or only as parallels of latitude, but as a uniform order of events involving the idea of causation or compelling power among phenomena. And, taking that in the meantime as at least an approximately accurate conception of a law of nature, we have next to ask, in pursuit of our purpose, whether the “causal connection,” which “conformity to law in nature *must* be conceived” to be, must be *in reality* as we must *think it* to be. Or while “conformity to law in nature must be conceived as a causal connec-

¹ *The Aim and Progress of Physical Science.*

tion," may there after all in reality be no such causal connection as we must think there is? A change takes place before me—a cloud, say, is formed against the blue and moves across the sky, or there is a sudden swaying of the branches of the trees around me, and, while I may not know what the real cause is, I say not only that there is a cause of the change, but that there *must be* a cause, and a cause *adequate* to the production of the change perceived, and I would say the same of *any* event that has *ever* taken place in *this* world or in *any other* world, and of every *possible* event that could be thought of in any time or place, past, present, or future. Can I have such a belief and at the same time rationally maintain that I can *possibly* be wrong in that belief and that there *may be* worlds where event may follow event in uniform sequence without any cause of those events, or of the sequence, or of the uniformity in the sequence? Or would not that be like declaring that what we *must* think we *need not* think? It would not be only *like* declaring it, it would be declaring it, and there is no way of escaping the absurdity but by *denying* that we are under any such necessity of thinking that there must be a cause for every change; and if anyone chooses to do so, he will do so, not rationally, but arbitrarily, and he will have to settle the question not only with common sense and philosophy, but with every scientific investigator living and with himself among the number. "The scientific investigator," says Huxley, "who notes a new phenomenon may be utterly ignorant of its cause, but he will, without hesitation, seek for that cause. If you ask him why he does so, he will probably say that it must

have had a cause, and thereby imply that his belief in causation is a necessary belief."¹

It is to be observed that to settle the question which we have raised, whether what we must think to be, as seeing to be self-evidently true, must be in reality as we think it, it is not necessary in any way to discuss the question about the origin of our knowledge, or of necessary beliefs, nor to follow a crowd of authors like Mill and Huxley through all the inept illustrations by which they would seek to convince us that *what we must think to be true may at the same time be seen to be false*: we have only to be *logically consistent* in maintaining that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same relations. If we *must*, from the very nature of our mental constitution, or of the truth perceived, believe that every change has a cause, we evidently cannot at the same time believe that possibly it may not without a manifest contradiction and absurdity. If we *must* believe it or think it, we must, and there is no *may-be-not* admissible; and if we may think that *possibly* it *may not be*, we as manifestly need not think that it is: there is *no must* in the matter. The necessity spoken of embraces alike the internal world of thought and the external world of things in such a way that to deny its objectivity is to deny its subjectivity as well, and to deny its subjectivity is to make experience meaningless and science absurd and impossible.

As the result then of this apparent digression from our consideration of the beautiful, we have the rationality, scientifically established, of the belief in the objective existence of things and laws which, as we

¹ *Hume*, c. 6, English Men of Letters Series.

have seen, involve the thought and reality of a beauty throughout the physical universe ; and the rationality, scientifically and metaphysically made good, of the belief in the reality of a *causal power* which in its operation continuously gives rise to, and maintains the beautiful by various laws ; and consequently we have a surer ground from which to proceed with a brief discussion of a question which may seem to some as barren of speculative interest, and as incapable of settlement as the old scholastic puzzle of how many angels could dance on the point of a needle, but which to others has the greatest of charms, and seems in reality as easy of settlement as the question whether when we agree with an author or artist our tastes are the same as his. And the question is this, Is the beauty which we perceive in the world an end itself in creation ? And, in as far as we perceive and rejoice in it for its own sake, are we one with God in our love of it ? Does He too love the beautiful in which we so much delight ? And are our ideas of it consequently, so far as they exist, identical with His and His with ours ? And may we thus be said to be one with God in the unity of perception ?

The question, as we have said, may possibly seem to some as far beyond our grasp as the angels which dance on a needle's point ; and yet in simple truth, it is as easy of settlement as the question how far this picture agrees with that, and far more easy to answer than the query, how far does Spencer agree with Kant, or Mill with Hume ? In fact, we may say that, by the very conditions of knowledge and the constitution of our nature, there is only one reasonable answer possible. Granting that there is a God at all (and it is only on the supposition that there is

that we can now discuss the question), we can no more rationally doubt that He is pleased with the beauty which pleases us, than we can rationally doubt the fact of our perception of beauty, or the truthfulness of our knowledge of external nature as disclosed by sense and science. If the world which is God's is that marvel of beauty, from its inmost structure to its remotest bounds, which we have been seeking in this chapter to show that it is; and if we perceive and know it to be such, and take delight in it as such, then what are we doing at every turn of the eye, in every throb of pleasure in the fair and lovely, and in every glance through science into the unities of the cosmos, but declaring in our inmost nature, and with fullest emphasis of reason, our admiration of His works, our harmony in thought and feeling with Him, the oneness of our perception, so far as it goes, with His? If, when we assent to an author, and admire his work, and are in raptures with it, we agree with him so far in perception and thought, and are perfectly at one with him in our taste (and what other idea of unity in perception and harmony in thought can we have?), are we not just as much in harmony with God when we love, and are enraptured with the thought of, what He has made? If the work of the one may be held to be the expression of his thought and feeling and mental tendencies, how can we refuse to recognize His creation as the manifestation of God's? And in our admiration of what is good and heroic in conduct, and in our love of virtue and truth and so forth, must we not believe, if we are to believe in goodness and in a God of goodness at all, that He and we again are at one in perception and

approval—that His tastes and likings (if we may so speak with reverence) are not only analogous to, but identical in *kind*, with our own? To deny it is simply to deny the possibility of knowledge, love, or obedience, and to make what we call God an impenetrable blank and negation, leaving Him the Infinitely Unknowable indeed, but *without manifestation* for ever.

But law, law, say some; law and sexual selection with utility, are sufficient to account for it all—for all the beauty which eye and ear can perceive in this wondrous world around us, and also for things that are ugly to our eyes; but how, they ask, are we to account for the ugly things in creation on the principle that the Creator's love of beauty is analogous to ours, not to say identical with it? If "the analogy is to be trusted," we have been told, "then there ought to be no natural objects which are disagreeable or ungraceful in our eyes. And yet it is undoubtedly the fact that there are many such. Just as surely as the horse and deer are beautiful and graceful, the elephant, rhinoceros, and camel are the reverse. The majority of monkeys and apes are not beautiful; the majority of birds have no beauty of colour; a vast number of insects and reptiles are positively ugly. Now, if the Creator's mind is like ours, whence this ugliness? It is useless to say that it is a mystery we cannot explain, because we have attempted to explain one half of creation by a method that will not apply to the other half. We know that a man with the highest taste, and with unlimited wealth, practically does abolish all ungraceful and disagreeable forms and colours from his domains. If the beauty of creation is to be explained by the

Creator's love of beauty, we are bound to ask why He has not banished deformity from the earth, as the wealthy and enlightened man does from his estate, and if we can get no satisfactory answer, we shall do well to reject the explanation offered."¹

The general question of the existence of the ugly will be carefully considered in the following chapter, and so we need not enter upon it here. But it is queer to find a naturalist like Wallace suggesting that if God's love of beauty were like our own, He would abolish apes and elephants, reptiles and rhinoceroses and camels, etc., from the earth, when, as a matter of fact, these are some of the things which we all like to see, and pay to get seeing in shows and zoological gardens and museums and the like, and which a man of the highest taste and with unlimited means, especially if he were a naturalist, would stock his domains with, we should say, and love to have about him. And if from economical reasons we would not care to stock our domains with them, we all at any rate would like to see them in their natural spheres and native vigour; and there is nothing which some of us would more enjoy—nothing which we would take greater pleasure in observing. The comparative ungainliness of some creatures does not prevent us from taking an interest in them; and in fact in any conceivable world in which cognition and recognition were possible, we would inevitably have differences which would involve comparison and contrast of beauty and ugliness—of lesser and greater in aesthetic perception and pleasure. A painting must have its lights and shades, its brighter

¹ "Creation by Law," by Alfred R. Wallace, *Quarterly Journal of Science*, October, 1867.

and darker colours, and parts which when taken in abstraction might seem unsightly : but these are the things which make the picture, and without which it could not exist. It takes all kinds of things as well as people to make a world ; and the greater its variety, the deeper is its unity, and the greater is the wonder of it, and the deeper our joy in its vision. Variety is the spice of life, and the most noticeable feature in creation. No two faces, no two crows, no two blades of grass are exactly like each other. And to think of law as accounting for the variety in unity and the beauty which we see in creation, is like thinking of a picture as sufficiently accounted for by its own existence. The things must be there to be seen before we can think of the law of their existence ; and the law of their existence is not something different from them with which they can dispense, but rather the manifestation to reason of their inmost essence and of their mutual relations and influences. The " Law of Variation, which is expressed by the lines

‘ No being on this earthly ball
Is like another all in all,’ ”

is only the things as observed and the order of the things for which it is said to account.

And as to beauty-regulated sexual selection among insects, birds, and beasts, even granting it to be as real, and as widely prevalent, and as influential in its operation as the most enthusiastic Darwinian could allow it to be, it cannot possibly account for the forms, and the colours, and the sounds and the taste for them, which are *presupposed in its exercise*. Given an already existing beauty with a taste for it in operation, and the selection which you speak of might help us to under-

stand why that kind of beauty should grow in intensity in the course of generations; but it "contributes nothing at all to its *essence* and its *first origination*. It can never, for example, show how the individual bird begins so to distribute the deposit of colour on the feathers that they, apparently irregular in the several feathers and barbs, produce in their juxtaposition regular and beautiful markings."¹ And, to say nothing of the lower forms of animal life where sexual selection cannot be admitted to exist, but of which some nevertheless are possessed of exquisite beauty, the theory of beauty by sexual selection leaves out of account all the glory and grandeur of garden, and field, and forest, and mountain, and sky, and cloud, and rock, and eddying pool. *The universe remains as it was without the choice supposed* with the exception of a growing conspicuity of form, or colour, or improvement in song, in certain animal species: and the increased beauty of those species is itself, by the theory we are discussing, directly referred to mind. It has been produced, according to the theory, by deliberate choice, and it exists for a specified end and purpose in creation. It is still for appearance and for pleasure, though for use.

And similar remarks might be made about the utility of beauty to plants and animals in natural selection. There may be an invitation to bees and other fertilizing insects in the colours of some plants; the form of the leaves may be seen to be good for the growth and nourishment of the plant or tree to which they belong, as of course they are—though the tree or plant, be it noted, must exist before the leaves could be good for it, and what it would be without its leaves in idea along with it, it would be hard for any one to

¹ Hartmann's *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, vol. i., p. 288.

say ; and bird and beast may often be protected by their likeness to the objects amid which they live. But the tendency to assimilation, which is unexplained by natural selection, is itself one of the marvels, one of the beauties, of creation ; and there are beauties of anemophilous and self-fertilizing as well as of entomophilous flowers ; and there are forms and colours in sea and earth and sky for which no conceivable use *to the things exhibiting them* can be assigned. “ We have hitherto,” says the Hon. Justice Fry in a notable paper on the subject, “ we have hitherto, according to promise, been considering the beauty of flowers as detached from all surrounding facts, and isolated from all other parts of the plant. But, in fact, this beauty of the inflorescence of plants is only one phenomenon of a much larger class. The petals and sepals are only leaves ; and it is difficult to argue about the character of the flower-leaves and omit from thought the stalk and root-leaves ; and these leaves continually possess a wealth of beauty both of form and colour for which no intelligible utility has ever been suggested. The use made of conspicuous leaves in the modern style of bedding-out and the cultivation in hot-houses of what are called foliage plants, will recall this to every one. In many cases the stems of plants, often the veins of leaves, and often the backs of the leaves, are the homes of distinct and beautiful colouring, for which, so far as I know, no account can be given on the score of use. To enlarge our view yet a little more, the brilliant colours of the fungi and of the lichens, mosses, and sea-weeds, and lastly the outburst of varied colours in the autumn—the crimson of the bramble, the browns of the oaks, the red of the maple, the gold of the elm, the sunshine of the withering fern—all those present

themselves to us as closely akin to the painted beauty of flowers that we cannot think of the one without the other; and we may well hesitate to accept as satisfactory a theory which can offer no explanation of phenomena so closely akin to those of flowers, except, forsooth, that they are merely accidental."¹

But we may widen our view still further. How can the theory of utility to the thing exhibiting it accounting for its beauty be applied to the glories of the dawn or sunset, or to the solemn grandeur of the clouds or the midnight sky? Of what use to the rainbow is its colour? or the ripples on its surface to river or lake? or the whiteness of the foaming surge to the sea? or their varied beauties to the pebbles on the beach, or to granite, or marble, or glittering gold? And, lastly, if all the beauties of colour and form wherever perceived should be found to be useful for the maintenance or the protection of their objects, what difference would it make to the idea of beauty being an end in creation, or to the idea of our taste for it so far as it exists being one with God's? The discovery would only verify the contention by proving the beautiful to be at the root of creation and "creation's final law."

No matter what may be the laws involved in its production, or the means employed for securing it, or its use in nature, there is beauty universally in the things around us; and if any spot or feather on the wing of butterfly or bird has grown more lovely in the course of ages by the taste of the female for that spot or feather, or if the colours and forms of even the rainbow and the rose should be found useful to them as well as necessary to the very idea of them as rainbow and

¹ "On the Utility to Flowers of their Beauty," *Contemporary Review*, December, 1879.

rose, their beauty need none the less be an end in creation. It is rather directly assumed and asserted by the theory to exist for a very definite end and purpose. It exists at least for the female and for the maintenance of the species, or for the rainbow or the rose exhibiting it; and it is to be assumed, it would seem, as a principle of investigation by the naturalist and philosopher, that every beauty in creation has its use—its definite and beneficent end. And that may well be; and we can believe it; and we may be thankful for the assertion of the thought by men of science, if only they will enlarge their ideas of use—of the use of beauty—to other ends than that of the self-existence of the individual or the species exhibiting the beauty. If they will say that the beauty of a flower may be useful not only for the requirements of the flower itself, but for the bee and the beetle it may be, and for the man who can gaze on it with admiration, and for other numerous and unknown purposes perhaps; and so with all the pageants of the changing seasons—that they are useful not only to themselves, but for ends outside of themselves in the pleasures, say, of sense or reason, or in the grandeur of the moral life, we shall respond, and respond with enthusiasm, that they speak as wise men and as facts abundantly suggest, and that they are opening up the way for more hopeful scientific investigation and for grander ideas of God and of His world. But if they seek to bind us down to one narrow idea of use in self-existence, and, when speaking of the marvellous variety in the appearances of leaves, ask, as if the questions were mutually exclusive and inconsistent, “Does it result from some innate tendency of each species? Is it intentionally designed to delight the eye of man? or has the form, and size, and

texture some reference to the structure and organization, the habits and requirements of the whole plant?"¹ and then proceed to write and to investigate as if an affirmative to the last question could be the only true, and a fully complete, answer to them all, we shall say, and say with all the emphasis of full conviction, that they are as partial in their views as those who would maintain that the beauty of creation was only to delight the eye of man, and that the fulness of creation escapes them. We shall take the liberty, moreover, of pointing out that "the form, and size, and texture," of leaves not only have "some reference" to their "structure and organization," but that they *are* their structure and organization, and that habits and requirements are in turn involved in these, and are part of the "idea" or "innate tendency" to be realized in the growth of the plant. And, instead of putting the questions we have quoted as if they were mutually exclusive and inconsistent, we shall combine them in one affirmation and say, that the form of the leaf results from some innate tendency or idea to be realized, *and* is useful for the plant, *and* is for man's delight, *and* for a thousand other things perhaps of which we know nothing and may never know anything. But beauty and use, though found united in nature, are after all as distinct from each other in thought and perception as colour from sound or the heat of the fire from the flickering flame; and no discovery of use can affect the question which we have been discussing, the question, viz., Does God delight in the beauty which He has made us to admire? And there can be only one true rational answer to it when it is put in that form, and that is, that He does. If He has made it

¹ "On Leaves." By Sir John Lubbock. *Contemporary Review*, May, 1885.

(no matter how nor by what method), and made us to admire it, it must at the same time be assumed that He has pleasure in it.

And if you should say, "But we do not know anything of a personal God to begin with, and so it is premature to discuss the question whether He sees things as we see them or not," you do not even thereby escape the conclusion that at all events our taste is in accordance with the "constitution and course of nature" in her innermost laws and structure. For, as already quoted from Tyndall, "we are here as the upshot of her operations, endowed with capacities to enjoy not only the materially useful, but with others of indefinite scope and application, which deal alone with the beautiful and the true." And since these faculties are the outcome of her operations they must also be conceived of as *in harmony with herself*—as one in fact with her own constitution. Our perception of beauty in such a case must still be thought of as in essential agreement with the Unknown Power of which all phenomena are said to be but varied manifestations; and that is only an agnostic way of saying that our perceptions of beauty, so far as they go, are one with God's. The world's of reality and of perception and thought are still in unison, and, though we may choose to ignore the fact, are still in reality inseparable except by abstraction. There is the presupposition of an intelligible universe, and so of the unity of all things in reason—of beauty and of a taste for beauty from everlasting.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF BEAUTY AND THE EXISTENCE
OF THE UGLY.

THERE is beauty everywhere ; but is everything beautiful ? For that is the point to which we have next to attend. And when we do attend to it we find that the question is not so easily answered as might at first sight appear, that in fact it is one which involves in the long run some of the knottiest points in philosophy and theology, and that there is no end almost to the discussions to which it may give rise in the very highest departments of thought and speculation.

Of course we all will say that there are many things which are ugly, and that everyone may see it for himself. It might even be maintained with some degree of plausibility that ugliness is more prevalent than beauty ; for a thing is beautiful only in contrast with other things which comparatively at least are less so. There are not many faces which we call beautiful, and there are many which we would be inclined to call plain, if not ugly. And so with all classes of objects : it is only the few that would be called the beautiful of their kind. But then in these cases we speak of only the *emphatically* beautiful, the *most* beautiful of their kind ; and there may after all be nothing, however comparatively plain, which may not

have a beauty of some kind when viewed in certain relations and from a certain standpoint. "A hundred things in anatomy which seem horrible to the unassisted sight acquire a touching and impressive delicacy and a poetical charm which approaches the sublime" when looked at through the microscope. "A mere drop of blood, of a brick-dust red by no means agreeable to the naked eye, heavy, thick, and opaque, if you look at it when dry, under the magnifying glass, presents to you a delicious rose-bloom, with delicate ramifications as fine and subtle as those of the coral are coarse and dull." Or "take the dull, gray, dusty, odious horse-fly, which lives on warm blood; its eye to the magnifying glass offers the strange faëry spectacle of a mosaic of jewels, such as all the art of Froment-Meurice has scarcely invented." "In the spider's foot, which to the naked eye was a tiny, obscure blade of a dirty brown, and somewhat repulsive, appeared," says Michelet, "a magnificent comb of the most beautiful shell, which, far from being dirty, by its extreme polish, was rendered incapable of being soiled, everything glided off it."¹

And the spider does not stand alone in having a beauty which is unperceived by the ordinary naked eye. There are many things whose beauty we do not see for want of perception acute enough to discern their parts in their true relations and reality, or because we have not given attention enough to discern them as they are. "There are thousands of species in all the three kingdoms of nature which to the vulgar eye seem worthy of no notice for their beauty or for anything else, while yet to the naturalist they are invested every one of them with a thousand charms." And the fact is not

¹ *The Insect*, b. ii., c. 5, 2 and 8.

hard to account for. For not only does the student of nature lose that instinctive abhorrence which makes us shrink from certain things which yet in themselves are really pretty (just as we may shudder at the idea of certain foods which yet are pleasant to the taste when we do not know what they are, or when we have overcome our prejudice), but he gets near enough to them and interest enough in them to observe them in their colour, their conformation, and their habits, and in all of these he finds more or less of adaptation, which is at least a beauty for the intellect. And if he dissects what may be called the ugliest of creatures, and considers it in its relations to the all-surrounding whole of things—the time of its first appearing, its habitat, the age of the world, and the season in which it appears, the purpose it apparently fulfils, with all its other surroundings and external conditions of existence—he will see an order in its structure and a harmony in the creature with its environment which is perhaps no less than sublime. It is a part of a whole in which the offensive to the onlooker may be defensive to itself, and in which the ugliest of things may show a design of benevolence, and so contain within it a thought and idea attractive to us all—a phase of the beautiful.

And then we are not to take it for granted that ours are the *only* eyes that see. There are creatures beneath us with all degrees of perception apparently up to man's, each taking delight in a class of objects and surroundings peculiar to its kind, and so it may be in some way having a perception also of a beauty in things in which we can discern none. And as there are many beneath us with tastes differing from our own, so there may possibly at least be creatures above

us with minds which enable them to take a wider, a more comprehensive, grasp of things in their mutual relations than we can take, and who may consequently see a purposed harmony and symmetry of parts where our mind and senses fail us. There is a relativity in perception, not only as to ugliness and beauty, but with respect to everything which we can think of as perceptible to us or to others; and the relativity, as we have seen, so far from being an argument to the unreality or unsubstantiality of what is perceived, is the only guarantee we can have of their real existence. At anyrate it is no more an argument for the subjectivity of beauty or ugliness than it is for the subjectivity of the world as a whole or in any of its parts.

And so we may conclude from the line of argument which we have been following that all is beautiful, and is as it should be, in its place—that all is very good. “Let us but forget ourselves,” says Dr. Macvicar, “and instead of comparing other species with ourselves, other forms with our own, let us view them all, each in its own place in nature and in its true relations with the series of forms it belongs to, and it will be found that there is not a single form in nature that could be dispensed with, and that every object, when in its own place in nature, is both better than if it were wanting, or if anything else, which the finest imagination could propose, occupied its place. Nor do these remarks apply only to minute objects, such as we have happened to have touched upon. Let everything be looked at where it stands and viewed in reference to its place in nature and its function in her economy—not to our convenience or partialities—and all is beautiful, transcendently

beautiful, the desert as well as the oasis, the wilderness as well as the garden, the precipice and snow-covered mountain as well as the grass-covered hill joyful with flocks. In fine," he says, "if we had but reach of mind enough to take an all-embracing view of the universe, we should find that all was supremely, all perfectly beautiful."¹ And if it should be said, as we can easily conceive it might be said, 'But that is to solve a difficulty by appealing to our ignorance, or by supposing that our expectation must correspond to reality,' we would reply that the doctrine is in harmony with the scientific faith, which is the first postulate of progress, that there is nothing in nature without its reason, and that difficulties demand from the inquirer only patient and continued investigation for their solution.

There, then, is the expression of an opinion which is apparently the very reverse of that with which we all might naturally start. While people in general would say, without any thought of an opposite opinion being possible, 'Of course there are some things which are ugly—many things,' we are gravely told that there is nothing that is ugly—that all is supremely, all perfectly, beautiful. The contradiction seems glaring enough, and yet it is only in appearance perhaps that there is any. ~~Many~~ Many things are ugly when considered apart from their connection and place in nature, or when judged of through prejudice, or by an unfair standard; but they are all perfectly beautiful when judged of in connection with the system of things of which they form a part and the purpose which they serve. ~~The~~ "The fact of the existence of the ugly in nature may be admitted," says Macvicar,

¹ *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, c. 1.

“yet without disparagement to the doctrine that ultimately, and to the eye of intelligence, all nature is beautiful. Nay, let it not be deemed a paradox, if we affirm that because of the existence of the ugly in nature, the beauty of nature as a whole is enhanced, and that not merely as the beauty of a concord is enhanced by the seasonable introduction of a discord, but because of what ugliness is in itself, and because of the purpose it serves.” And that at least is an intelligible enough position to take in discussion, and it is one which no one who really believes in the unity of nature will lightly set aside. For if nature is one and rational in its system, then all that appears in nature must partake of the reason of the whole and be looked at in the light of it. And if we look at things in their want of connection with the system of which they form a part, we shall be apt to put ourselves in the position of children and fools, who, proverbially, should never see things half finished.

But we do not exhaust the idea of the ugly by considering things that may be perceived directly by the senses. For if there are thoughts and fancies and trains of reasoning and lines of conduct and character that are beautiful, there are also those which are usually designated the reverse; and the question at once arises, is there any way by which *these* can be included in the category of the beautiful? Can dishonesty, and lying, and cruelty, and murder, and the like, be rationally regarded *from any point of view* as consistent with the doctrine that everything has a beauty when considered in connection with the whole of things around us? Is what is known as sin in theology after all a part of the all of things which work together for good? For

it is evident that the argument which we have been following would inevitably lead us to that—to the inclusion of even moral evil in the system which is “all supremely, all perfectly beautiful.” And there have not been wanting theologians of the highest repute who have not shrunk from that position—who have indeed deliberately assumed and maintained it. St. Augustine held that sin does not disturb the order and beauty of the universe—that “as a painting with dark colours rightly distributed is beautiful, so also is the sum of things beautiful for him who has power to view them all at one glance, notwithstanding the presence of sin, although, when considered separately, their beauty is marred by the presence of sin. God would not have created those angels and men of whom He knew beforehand that they would be wicked, if He had not also known how they would subserve the ends of goodness; the whole world thus consists, like a beautiful song, of oppositions.”¹ And that, perhaps, is no more than is involved in the sayings that “Good comes out of evil,” that “God ruleth all things according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth,” or that it is only in the struggle for existence that intelligence is evolved and virtuous characters formed. Take away the strife, the temptation, the disease, and death around us, and that have prevailed from the first of times among animals as men, and what progress in evolution could we think of as existing? What thoughts of God or of goodness could we have? Or how could we have had such a history as that of Jesus of Nazareth, to whom, more than to anything else perhaps in history, we owe all that is highest in civilization, in morality, and aspiration

¹ Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*, vol i., p. 343.

to-day? Nay, can we conceive of good at all without evil, or holiness without sin, any more than we can conceive of light without darkness, or effect without cause, or the less without the more? Is there not in these a correlation of terms, and so of things in thought which we can dispense with only on condition of not thinking at all?

It might be objected, of course, to such a line of reasoning that if sin and strife be necessary to the development of intelligence and virtue, they must be thought of as eternal, and that there is no use in trying to get rid of them, that Christian effort in such a case must be suicidal. For if there be no knowledge of good without contrast with evil, then to war with evil, it might be said, is to engage in an enterprise the success of which would be the extinction of the good. The light would vanish with the darkness. The aim of the moral law would be self-contradictory; and the whole enthusiasm called forth by the strife with sin, directed to the annihilation of that which is necessary to its own continuance. And, on the other hand, if there be any ground for the belief in a sinless future, then that cannot be a mere colourless blank. Love without hate, purity without foulness, beauty without deformity must be no impossibility.¹ And the objection would have point, we would reply, *if we asserted the necessity of the contrast in actual existence everlastingly in each individual*. If there could be no goodness in reality without the co-existence coevally of sin *in the individual*, no love in reality without a contemporaneously real hatred, no actual beauty without a contrasting actual ugliness *at the same time and in the same spot*, then might it be said with truth that

¹ Muller's *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, v. i., pp. 411, 432 of Clark's translation.

Christian effort would be suicidal as resulting in the destruction of the good with the sinful, and that the hoped-for heaven of the Apocalypse would be an impossibility. But no such assertion is needed for the maintenance of the position we have stated. All that is needed for the contention urged, and for the setting of sin and strife harmoniously in the picture of a perfect universe, and making it beautiful as a whole, is that they be real in thought, and be conceived of as in some way leading on to a higher state of being and enjoyment than there would be without them. And that, we say, is no more than the pious allow when they say that God may bring good out of evil, and no more than is contained in the common proverb, "No cross, no crown," and no more than the Scriptures assert when they aver that all things work together for good to those that love God. And, what is of greater concern and of more practical account in the present, it is no more than what is given in daily experience in the life of every man among us. Having passed through suffering, we can sympathize, and sorrow gives rise to sweetest song. The ear which has been pained by discord can best appreciate the harmony of sweet sounds; the eye which has turned with loathing from unsightly scenes can dwell with greatest rapture on pictures of untainted loveliness; the heart which has been wrung with anguish by wicked conduct or unfaithful lives can best appreciate the love and constancy of devoted friends; and through the world's sin we have received the highest revelation of the life divine, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."¹

¹ Ephesians iii. 10.

But while sin itself may thus be conceived to be "a stepping stone to higher things," or a part of the all of things that work together for good, it is not thereby *fixed inevitably in the constitution of the individual or the race* so that it can never be got rid of, do what we will. It is enough for the contrast and correlation in our thought that we have *passed through it* in experience and bear it in memory as a thing gone by ; and so a time may come in our experience when moral evil will in reality be non-existent and the now expected heaven of the pious a present fact. But what *even then*, according to Scripture, will give pathos and animation to the song of the redeemed ? The *remembrance of the evil through which they have passed*. "Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood" is the substance of it constantly. And is there any suicidal tendency in the contrast of evil and good, or any practical hindrance to religious effort in such a representation of things ? No, emphatically no ; but the very reverse. Nor do we, as might be objected, by such a line of argument make sin a condition in every conceivable personality for the perception of moral good.¹ It may be as a matter of fact that we all have sinned, and that our sins have been the occasion of a grander display of the mercy and love of God than could have been possible to us without them, and that so far they harmonize with the idea of a perfect and all beautiful universe as a whole ; but so far from that being a reason why we should think of *every conceivable personality* as necessarily passing through sin to conceive of and know what holiness is, it is a reason rather *for thinking the reverse* ; for by our statement

¹ Müller's *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, vol. i., pp. 433-4, Clark's translation.

we have attained to a thought which already embraces in itself all the manifold of experience, and *which therefore cannot itself have come through experience.* But of that anon.

We are now in a position to criticize and appreciate at its worth the idea of those who would maintain that while the contrast and correlation of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, are necessary *in thought*, they are not so *in reality and among things as perceived*. "It would seem," they say, "that just as without the possibility of wrong not only the joy in the right, but even the whole significance of its conception would vanish, so the *thinkableness* of the ugly is necessary for the *thinkableness* of the beautiful. But that does not mean that the reality of an ugly thing is necessary as a foil for beauty, but only that the conception of beauty is empty and unthinkable if that of ugliness does not stand opposed to it in the world of the thinkable."¹ And that, as we have just been seeing, is so far right. We may come to have joy in the good, although we may see for the time no taint of sin in actual fact; and though he perceives both beauty and ugliness in moral character, as none of us can, the Christ did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. And there may be other cases, many of them, of even unfallen innocence, and yet good and evil, beauty and ugliness, may co-exist in thought and be in necessary correlation to such pure angelic beings as well as to ourselves. But the supposition does not do away with the necessity to the creature for the existence somewhere of an ugly thing for the perception of something beautiful, nor of sin as a fact for the appreciation of

¹ Lotze's *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland*, Zweite Buch, Viertes Kapitel.

its opposite and for effort to attain it. For from what source do we get the *material* of our knowledge, the actual *content* of it? Is it not from experience outward and inward? And if we had never perceived an ugly thing *in actual fact*, would the ugly as such have ever been *thinkable* to us as men? No more than causality without the perception of change, or shade without light, or the few without the many. Our judgments as to the beauty or deformity of any plant or animal, say, are formed from our relative familiarity with the individuals of that species and the attention which we may have given them for this or that purpose. And so with the individuals of every species and of all species whatsoever. Our thoughts of their relative beauty or deformity are based upon our *previous experience with them in reality*; and ugliness or beauty is a general abstract concept from all things previously perceived—a concept given by them as occasion, but involved in them also from the first. And so to us *the thinkableness of the ugly implies the previous existence and perception of some ugly thing*. The thinkable in this case rests upon and involves the existence, at some time or other, if not now, of the actual; and so the existence of the ugly is, with the explanations given, necessarily involved in the perception of the beautiful, and of sin in the thought of moral goodness.

But does not the idea of sin as thus necessary for the perception, and the very existence to us in thought, and so in reality, of moral goodness destroy its very nature as sin? Do we not by so conceiving of it change it in our thoughts to a necessary good, and make it *a constituent part of the universe from everlasting*? For is not reason

one, and is not all thought the same in kind? And if ugliness as a fact is necessary to us for the thought of the beautiful, and moral deformity for the perception and thought of excellence of character and the beauty of holiness, must not they be thought to be equally necessary *for God*, who, while it may be His will that we should have His other and higher thoughts and perceptions of them, must at least see things as we see them and think of them as we think of them? For may we not indeed with truth adopt the language of mystics and say that He sees through our eyes, and hears through our ears, and in general that He is one with us in the "unity of apperception"? Is that any more, it may be asked, than to say, as all good Christians admit, that He knows our every thought and feeling and understands all about us? If, then, the necessary contrast of evil and good in our thoughts implies their existence for perception somewhere, and at some time or other, must it not have been the same with God from everlasting?

These questions bring us, we may say, to the one great and final difficulty of all the so-called optimistic systems of thought, and of everyone indeed who would attempt to "justify the ways of God to man." But must we regard it as a difficulty that is absolutely insuperable? Or may not reason answer every question that can be rationally put? We cannot go behind or outside of reason for an explanation of reason; but *reason must be thought of as able to settle every rational problem*. That may not at first sight seem very apparent, and men are constantly writing and speaking as if it were not true; but it is really no more than

saying that *reason is equal to its own functions*, or that what is, is, which is an identical proposition. Whatever else it may be, the rational is always the intelligible, the thinkable, the explicable, what can be grasped and held in thought. It is that at least, or it is nothing. And if a question is rational, *I* may not be able to answer it to your satisfaction, and *others* may not be able, but an answer that is wholly satisfactory *to one who can take it in* must be thought of as possible to, and attainable by, reason as such, and by the reason too in which we all of us share.

And now, though the very thought of such a thing may seem to some irreverent, let us see if we can bring as much reason to bear upon the difficulties before us as will dissolve them as vapours in the general light of thought. When we make the reality of evil a condition for the perception of goodness, and the existence of sin a means of education and a condition of the existence of the highest holiness, do we not thereby, it is asked, change them from evil into good? Do we not in the very same breath assert and deny their existence, posit and annul them, make them to be and not to be at one and the same time? And *what if we do*, it may be asked in reply? Do we not thereby give expression to their *inmost character*, and give utterance to *the modes of their real existence*? They *are*, but they are as *vanishing illusions in reference to the whole of things*; and so they are and are not at one and the same time--are, that is to say, in one relation and not in another. When Joseph was sold by his brethren, they meant it for evil, but God meant it unto good, as it came

to pass in history; is there any contradiction there? Any changing of evil into good and making the conduct of the brethren holy? No; but there is the bringing of good out of evil, and the making of it, as we have been saying, a conditional necessity of historical progress. And so with the crucifixion of Christ, and with all the sins of men we may say. We individually may abuse our power; but in all our actions *there is a further end and object aimed at than we are for the moment conscious of*, and the power we employ for bad ends may be working for the destruction of the bad in spite of us. Through all the warring of the desires and passions within us, there is a higher purpose of peace. God, as we say in religious language, is disposing things for His glory, and even the wrath of man is made to praise Him. For it is with our powers and passions in the rearing of the great spiritual temple of God as it is with the elements of fire and wind and water in the constructing of our houses. "The building of a house is, in the first instance, a subjective aim and design. On the other hand we have, as means, the several substances required for the work—iron, wood, stones. The elements are made use of in working up this material: fire to melt the iron, wind to blow the fire, water to set wheels in motion, in order to cut the wood, etc. The result is, that the wind, which has helped to build the house, is shut out by the house; so also are the violence of rains and floods, and the destructive powers of fire, so far as the house is made fire-proof. The stones and beams obey the law of gravity, press downwards, and so high walls are carried up. Thus the elements are

made use of in accordance with their nature, and yet to co-operate for a product, by which their operation is limited. Thus the passions of men are gratified; they develop themselves and their aims in accordance with their natural tendencies, and build up the edifice of human society; thus fortifying a position for right and order *against themselves*.”¹

In saying then that evil is necessary not only to the thought but to the existence of moral goodness, we not only do not abolish it as evil *in the relation in which we are thinking of it at the time*, and change it to a moral good, we do exactly the reverse: we make it *of necessity* an evil. We assert its absolute contrariety to goodness, and make them both, evil and good, essential to the thought of either. And it is only in the ambiguity of the word good that the strength or apparent reasonableness of the objection we are considering lies. If evil—moral evil—sin has been the occasion of a higher revelation of God to man than would have been possible without it, it may be said indeed to be a good in the sense in which a rock in the midst of a dashing stream may be said to be good for the production of spray and of rainbows when the sun is shining through it, but in no other sense. It is one of *the conditions*, that is to say, of the result; *but it does not partake of the nature of the result*, and still less is it identical with it in character. On the contrary, it is, *ex hypothesi*, and by the very nature of the case, sharply distinguished from it and made a very substantial fact. It is posited as something which *cannot* be done away with in the thought of

¹ Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, p. 28 of Bohn's translation.

the world as it is, and as necessary to the thought of a moral life, or a holy one in the creature anywhere.

But if sin be one of the conditions for the attainment historically of the highest good, must it not be a thing that God *must desire*—a thing that He Himself has ordained? And do we not thus again apparently destroy its very nature as sin? For if He wishes it and has ordained it, “why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?” And, in relation to our present course of argument, and from a purely philosophical point of view, it would evidently be no answer, but rather a putting of the question aside as inconvenient, to reply, “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?” Shall the thing formed say so? To be sure it will, though not to Him that formed it; and, in the case of man, it is just exactly what it does say, and what apparently it has a right to say and to ask, and to ask all the more vehemently too because it is the conduct of the maker of men that is in question. So far from its being a reason why the question should not be asked that it is God, our Maker and our Judge, that is said to have done so, that is exactly the reason why it should be put, and why it is put—because it is apparently so overwhelmingly at variance with all our notions of Him as good. It is asked from no irreverence or want of faith in Him as Father, but from the deepest seated reverence and the most immoveable conviction that the Judge of all the earth must do right, and that there can be nothing finally irrational in His government, and nothing merely arbitrary in His dealings with us. It is not, be it observed, a

question or point of dispute *between us and God*, but a question as to whether *our theory of the universe* can be accepted as correct and in accordance with reason and the facts of the case as presented. And, manifestly, it will be no better answer to the question which we have raised to say that there is a distinction to be drawn between being the author of sin in the sense of the actor of it and permitting or not hindering it.¹ For the question is not *whether he allows it*, which goes without saying, but whether, in view of the greater good of which it is the occasion, He must not as wise and good *directly desire it and bring it about*, and so be doing evil that good may come. Must not every theory which would make sin a necessary correlate or condition of goodness, or every theory in fact which starts with the idea of a personal God, involve that apparent *reductio ad absurdum*? Or is the absurdity only apparent, and may God do evil that good may come?

It will help us to get above the difficulty, I think, if we will reflect for a moment on what is involved in the thought of God as Spirit, or as the Self-determining, Self-revealing One. We say, do we not? that He is unchangeably the same from everlasting to everlasting, that He knows the end from the beginning; and it is usually averred that in Him "there is no before," that to Him there is neither past, nor future, but an "everlasting now." We do not admit that in Him there is any variation or growth in knowledge, that anything could be a surprise to Him or take Him at unawares. Everything that was, or is, or is to be, from the motion of a thistledown, or streak of light, or tint of flower, to the birth and death of men and of worlds,

¹ Jonathan Edwards on *The Freedom of the Will*, part iv., sect. ix.

was perceived from everlasting—it was known that it would be. May we take that for granted as the most reasonable position which we can assume—as in fact inevitably bound up with the thought of the God in whom we believe? If you say, ‘No; there may be, or there may have been, a progress in the knowledge of God analogous to our own growth in knowledge from experience and reason,’ I would say, Then either it must be because He had to consider what He was to do and determine as best on the whole, and then we leave Him in conception *a God in debate and perplexity* as to what He should do, and so as advancing from a state of comparative unconsciousness at least, if not in ultimate analysis of blank unconsciousness, to clearness of perception and determination, which is about equal to saying that he is not the God of Christendom; or we put Him alongside of His world to be awakened like ourselves by impressions from without, and so make Him at once *ignorant and finite*, which again is equal to saying that He is not God. Accepting, then, the commonly received thought of Him as from everlasting to everlasting the same in knowledge as in existence and power, we have the belief that there can be nothing new to Him, nothing unforeseen by Him—that all things from the beginning to the end of the worlds as we see them, and in all their complexity and to their minutest details, were naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. But that is just saying in other words, is it not? that the history of the world, which is in progress to us, was in the unity of reason everlastingly, that it is actually inseparable from the thought of God as Spirit, and that God as Spirit is inseparable from it, and that it is only by abstraction that we can think of them apart. There

can be little doubt, I think, that that is involved in the thought of God as eternally all-knowing; or rather it is only another way of saying the same thing. And so it would seem that, after all, we have implicitly in the common thought about God the Hegelian dictum that "the world is as necessary to God as God is to the world,"¹ and the apparently even stronger deliverance of a recent writer, that the "self and the world are only two sides of the same reality—the same intelligible world looked at from two opposite points of view. But it must not be forgotten," as he says, "that it is only from the point of view of the self or subject that the identity can be grasped," and that "this therefore is the ultimate point of view which unifies the whole."² But if the world, or the universe let us say, is thus involved in the very thought of God, or is itself, as we may say, *constitutive of Reason or Spirit*, we obviously cannot go behind it and ask for a cause of it, nor can we question in any way its rationality, for it is Reason itself in manifestation, or, as looked at in time and in historical progress, a rational process and system of thought. To ask, then, whether, if evil, as represented, be the occasion and condition of the development of the highest goodness, God must not be thought of as desiring evil that good may come and so as ultimately the only evil doer, is unwittingly to ask an irrational question *from a false presupposition of God as in an arbitrary and outside*

¹ Professor Veitch, in the introduction to his translation of the *Method and Meditations of Descartes*, criticises this position of Hegel (pp. 167-168 of eighth edition); but all that we contend for is contained in his admission that "we are accustomed to think of Deity as possessing existence in Himself necessary and self-sufficient; and if He have not this, He has no more or other reality than any finite being which arises in the succession of causality."

² *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, p. 38.

temporal relation to the world and to the things therein, and so from a presupposition which in final analysis abolishes itself in the abolition alike of God and of the world.

But, were we to stop there, it would be said of course that our view would exclude *the possibility of creation*, etc., and it is necessary for the completion of our thought, and the avoidance of misunderstanding, to remember that, while history, in all its manifestations and varied phenomena, sin itself included, is already from the first in the thought of God, it is not there as *only* a fixed and motionless thing like a landscape in a painting. It is there *as history*, that is, as a process of unfolding, and as containing within it the principle and spirit of progression, of advancement through antagonism and conflict from the lower to the higher, through death to life, and from sin into the unity of the human life in will and purpose with God. The process, the antagonism, the conflict, the defeat and the victory of life, or, in short, history and time, it has to be remembered, are not excluded, but *already included* in the thought of God as eternal and as eternally all-knowing; and if "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things," then while there may be, as no one can reasonably deny there is, sin, and while "every transgression and disobedience" may receive its "just recompense of reward," that does not interfere with, but rather affirms, the rationality and consequent beauty of history as a whole. There is still throughout the whole of it an organic unity of life; and the universe as a whole is seen to be the "unrolling of the varied God" in the beauty of His all-perfect life.

Having arrived at the position that the "real is the

rational," we are content, in the meantime, with accepting that dictum as one of the scientific and philosophic postulates of knowledge. Science in all its branches involves it and is built upon the thought, and experience itself is impossible without it; and there can be no better proof of the truth of it than that. It is to be assumed as an axiom in philosophy; and the sooner philosophers and theologians in general realize it, the better will it be for the world.

But a word before closing the discussion on a question whose settlement the acceptance of such an axiom would seem to involve. It will be said that it is *essentially optimistic*, and optimism seems to be the *bête noire* of theologians especially, who, one would imagine, would be naturally inclined to accept it. For "we acknowledge," says Cudworth, "the atheist's argument to be thus far good: that if there be a God, then of necessity must all things be well made and as they should be, *et vice versa*."¹ And Cousin to the same effect. "Either history," says he, "is an insignificant phantasmagoria and then it is a bitter and cruel mockery, or it has meaning, it is reasonable, and if it is reasonable it has laws, and necessary and beneficent laws, for every law must have these two characters. To maintain the contrary is a blasphemy against existence and its author."² But "optimism on such incredibly superficial grounds as satisfied Cousin and Hegel," says Professor Flint, "the pessimistic theories of men like Schopenhauer and Hartmann have rendered it impossible for any philosopher to accept."³ Perhaps so. But philosophers do queer

¹ *Intellectual System*, vol. iii., p. 464.

² *Modern Philosophy*, vol. i., lecture 7.

³ *Philosophy of History*, p. 190.

things"; and we are not accustomed to associate the names of men like Cudworth and Leibnitz and Cousin and Hegel with theories accepted on grounds "incredibly superficial." The Hegelian philosophy, I fancy, is wide enough to embrace the truth in any rational pessimistic theory that may be formed. In fact, it has embraced it from the first; for it is an "optimism on the basis of pessimism," and the two terms, like all other opposites, are held by it in reconciliation. But for ourselves we know nothing of *possible worlds*, either best or worst, *outside of the actual*; and if the real is the rational, as we maintain it is, the actual world is *the only one possible*, and it may be indifferently either the best or the worst, or both at the same time. If it is the *only* one possible, it is the best that could be and, for the same reason, it is the worst that could be; and so it is *at once both the best and the worst, and optimism and pessimism are identical*. But the use of such terms in such a relation is misleading. For a best implies a good and a better, and a worse and a worst; and that gives us again the idea of *possible worlds* when we maintain that we know nothing of possible worlds outside the actual. And so we can express the truth in the matter least ambiguously, while at the same time we leave the way open for unbounded hope, by saying that the Real is the Rational, and that the Rational is gradually becoming for us the Real; or, in the language of religion, that the world is God's, that He "ruleth and reigneth according to His will," and that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."¹ In a world where God reigns there can be nothing accidental, nor

¹ Romans viii. 28.

absolutely unreasonable. These things are only to us in our ignorance. But "the range of possibility narrows as knowledge widens, until to perfected knowledge possibility is lost in necessity."¹

¹ Professor E. Caird's Art. "Cartesianism," in ninth edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

CHAPTER XV.

COLOUR: WHAT IS IT?

AFTER the conclusion arrived at in the preceding chapter, it may seem like an anti-climax to begin a discussion on the question, What is colour? But the question has an intimate relation to, and a very decided bearing on, a position which, in the course of our discussion, we have been deliberately maintaining, a relation to, and a bearing on, the position, viz., that beauty may be regarded, not as a something merely with which we clothe the world from the stores of our own mind, but as a real, inherent property of material objects as well as of poetry, and character, and other such things perceived; and with a view to fortifying our position, and removing or neutralizing what may seem to some an insuperable objection, it seems necessary to ask what colour is, and to consider carefully what has been said of it by metaphysicians and by men of science.

Whatever, then, may be said as to where we see it, or what else the perception may involve, it will be allowed on all hands that colour is seen. We cannot open our eyes without seeing it in some one or more of its modifications. Everything visible is seen as coloured, and everything conceivably visible must be conceived of as coloured. But is it really

so? That is to say, do the objects which we see as coloured, and which we must conceive of as coloured, really possess a quality which we call colour? or do we impart it to them? Is colour a quality inherent in the object, or a modification of the percipient mind, or something that partakes of the nature of both, or what is it?

Everyone who is acquainted with philosophy must be aware that the almost unanimous opinion of philosophers from the time of Descartes has been and is, that colour is, properly speaking, a modification of the sentient subject, and not a quality of things around us. They speak of it as a sensation, or feeling, or as an affection of the mind—a sensation produced in us, it may be, by external objects, but which may have no more likeness to anything in those objects than pain has to solidity, or to the pin by which we may have been pricked. And if that be really so, essentially so—if we are bound as rational beings to believe it—anyone may see that it must have a very decided bearing on the question whether beauty may be regarded as a really inherent quality of outward objects. For are not many of the objects which we regard as beautiful, if not the majority of them, beautiful only so far as they are seen as coloured? Flowers, for instance, divest them of their beautiful colours, and how many of them would still be beautiful? Strip objects universally of the beauty which they owe to colour, and how much would be left? Very little indeed comparatively. If colour, then, in every case be simply a sensation or state of the percipient subject, and never a quality of objects as they exist around us, beauty, it is evident, must in a very large measure be allowed to be only a projection, as it were,

of the mind's sensibility upon the world, and not an inherent quality of external objects: for there is a beauty of colour as well as of form and moral action, and the colour being only apparent as opposed to real, beauty so far must be only apparent, and not real. And the argument has been used with great plausibility and apparent effect by Dr. Thomas Brown when discussing the question of beauty in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Mind*.¹

Now, such being the opinion of philosophers in general in regard to colour and its bearing on our position, it seems incumbent on us to examine the arguments by which they would make us believe that colour is not, as people generally believe, in outward objects, but in us who see them. And what are their arguments? So far as we can gather, they are such as we now proceed to test.

And, first of all, it is said that the various phenomena of colour may be produced by excitation from within or stimulus from without, without any coloured outward object being supposed to be present to determine or contain them.² Thus, as we have noticed in a preceding chapter, by pressing our hand firmly on our eyes, and directing them as if to look straight forward, we may see all sorts of colours moving and merging into each other and reappearing so long as we continue the experiment. And so with changes in our blood and bodily condition. The jaundiced see things as yellow; and so forth. And these are facts. It is a fact that I see colours when I press my hands on my eyes; and I suppose that with certain changes in my bodily condition I might see things as differ-

¹ See especially Lectures 53 and 54.

² Hamilton's *Reid*, note D, sect. ii.

ently coloured from what they appear to be now. But what then? These as abnormal and exceptional instances can be known to be such only through the normal and abiding; that is, the objection can be raised *only on the pre-supposition of the permanency of a state of things to which it does not apply*. When we see colours with our eyes shut, we do not see them as in outward objects, and *we know it*; and in the case of jaundice, we judge that we do not see things aright *only from a previous and regular usual perception of them as different*. We may see colours, as in the cases mentioned, which are not in outward objects; but then we distinguish between such perceptions and those which we have from our ordinary daily experience when in a healthy state of body and mind; and we can no more logically and truthfully argue from the subjectivity of what is perceived in the one case to the subjectivity of what is perceived in the other than we can legitimately infer that because some men are mad, therefore all are so. The perceptions may be true in both cases, and their objects real, though in different situations and relations. The exception, it is generally said, proves the rule; but here it may be used, it would seem, to prove that the rule is all exception.

That a change in our bodily condition may modify our perception can be no proof that colour as perceived is not a real quality of an object, unless it can be made out that the modification of colour which we thus perceive is *not itself a quality of our bodies in that changed condition*. But that, say in jaundice, it is usually supposed to be, and by hypothesis it arises at least from a change in our bodies which are material and real. Our change of vision may thus be caused by

the intervention of a *different* colour between the per-
cipient mind and the object looked at, and the modifica-
tion is not supposed to be a modification of the outward
object at all, but a difference in our perception from
the introduction of a new element of colour. In our
normal condition we may see one colour, and in the
modified condition we may see another ; but that is no
reason for saying that neither of them is real as
external to the mind and a quality of matter. One
colour may modify another, as when we look through
coloured glass to things beyond ; but that only draws
attention in our argument *to the glass which by com-
mon consent is coloured*. And there is this to be
noticed, that in looking through a coloured medium
we may see things indeed as tinged with the colour
of that medium, but generally, notwithstanding, they
retain in some degree their own peculiar and appro-
priate hues. There is a greenish-coloured vase before
me. I take it up and look through it at things around
me. I do not see them all as indistinguishably and
monotonously green. I still discern them as white,
or brown, or red as the case may be. I see each
object as I used to see it notwithstanding the inter-
vention of the vase between my eyes and it—with
the addition of course of the tint of the vase. And
so we suppose it would be in case of disease of body.
All the manifold varieties of colour as usually seen
have still to be accounted for. The world remains as
it was. *You have only turned our attention from one
phenomenon to another of the same kind.*

But “the whole actual phenomena of vision,” it is
said, “might be realized to us by the substitution of
an electro-galvanic stimulus, were this radiated in
sufficient intensity from bodies and in conformity

with optical laws.”¹ We are not sure that we know what is meant by a stimulus being “radiated from bodies in conformity with optical laws.” But the sentence as a whole seems to us to express nothing more than the truism, that an electro-galvanic stimulus might give rise to the whole actual phenomena of vision, *if things were so arranged that it could*. No doubt. But can it as things are now? We can conceive that such a galvanic stimulus might give rise to a perception of the different shades of colour, or to the representation of outward objects in one who had previously the use of his eyes to see them; but can we reasonably believe that it would enable one who had been blind from his birth to see things as I see them—the paper which is before me and the character of my handwriting, the pen which I hold and the books before me in their present arrangement with their various titles and sizes and hues? Would it be to anyone, in short, just as eyes, enabling him to perceive without the use of his eyes all that others see with them? Is there any reason for supposing that it would or could do any such thing? Such a stimulus might give even a blind man the perception of momentary, irregular flashes or streaks of light and colour such as we see when our eyes are closed, though we do not know that it would even do that; but to suppose that it would give him “the whole actual phenomena of vision”—all the things in their orderly and minute

¹ Hamilton's *Reid*, note D, sect. ii. Arguments similar to this and the preceding one are used by Helmholtz in his *Popular Scientific Lectures*. “Pressure upon the eyeball,” he says, “a feeble current of electricity passed through it, a narcotic drug carried to the retina by the blood, are capable of exciting the sensation of light just as well as the sunbeams.” Vol. i., *The Recent Progress of the Theory of Vision*, ii.

relations and details which I could see in any particular place to which I might go, or which I have at any time actually ever seen, is to suppose what at all events has not yet been shown to be given in experience, and what, we may safely say, is impossible. And even if an electro-galvanic stimulus could give all that is claimed for it, the question of the where and what of colour would remain unaffected by it, as we have tried to show in the preceding paragraph.

But as the sensation or perception of colour does not cease immediately with the removal or disappearance of the object in which the colour is supposed to reside, it cannot, it is said, be supposed to manifest any quality of it. As, for instance, when we turn from gazing on some brilliant colour and other objects seem to take its hue, or when we pass from darkness into light, or from sunshine into shade. But might not an inference the very reverse be just as legitimately, and much more naturally, drawn? For if I should say, as people generally believe, that *the object* was so intensely coloured as to dazzle me by its brightness, who is to prove that it was not? The colour which remains in the eye, or which seems to be there, you say, when we turn away from the object which was supposed to be coloured, proves that it was not in the object as believed. It proves, perhaps, that the colour which is perceived or felt to be in the eye is not, as apprehended in the same individual perception, in the external object; but then *it is not seen or believed to be there*, which makes quite a difference. When colour is seen as in the eye, it is not seen as an external object, and it does not prove that the object seen was not coloured as we saw it. And besides, if the argument is of any value, it might as well be used to prove that light is darkness,

or that darkness is light, or rather that there is neither the one nor the other, as that colour is a feeling. For if we turn from the glaring sunshine into the shade, or from the shade into the sunshine suddenly, we may not see anything for a while—a momentary blindness or darkness may be the result in either case. But must we just therefore have been deceived in thinking that the things we saw in the sunshine and shade were in reality as we saw them? or must we therefore be wrong in believing that there is a distinction after all between sunshine and shade, between darkness and light? The blindness in the transition from the one to the other is one phenomenon to be accounted for, and the seeing of solid objects as permanently coloured is another, and the one in no way disproves the reality of the other—the reverse we should say.

Another argument, however, has been found in the fact that objects change their colour. It is stated by Lucretius,¹ and it is found, for instance, in Locke. "Pound an almond," says Locke, "and the clean white colour will be altered into a dirty one, and the sweet taste into an oily one. What real alteration can the beating of the pestle make in any body, but an alteration of the texture of it?"² The beating of a pestle may make a good many real alterations in a body besides a change of texture, we should say. It may change its size and figure, destroy its unity,

¹ "Thus, when loud tempests tear the tortured main,
The dashing surge is robed in dazzling white—

But were its primary atoms tinged themselves
Black, or but blue, concussion ne'er could change
The fixt result; nor turn the black or blue
To the pure polish of the marble bust."

—*De Rerum Natura*, b. ii., Good's translation.

² *Of Human Understanding*, b. ii., c. 7, 20.

and from one thing may make it something else entirely. I may pound an almond out of existence as an almond, or beat a statue into dust; but would we therefore say that the almond and statue had never any real existence? or that they have simply been changed in texture? *They* have been changed, would you say? But there is now no *they* of which we may predicate the change, for almond and statue as such *have been beaten out of existence*. Were they never real? I might "bray a fool in a mortar" or pound him into pulp, and soon the matter of which his body was composed would be indistinguishable from the soil on which we walk and the elements around us. Yet who would say that in thus acting on him, I had annihilated any particle of matter? The fool and his body *in toto*, however, and not his colour only, would thus disappear. What were they? Something or nothing. And so we might argue on the principle of change, that there is no real quality of external things at all—that there is nothing but appearance and shadow around us, and that we ourselves have only a delusive, phenomenal existence in an unreal world

"Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream."¹

But if we cannot argue from the mere fact of change in other things which are usually deemed external to their non-reality apart from us and our sensibility, why should it be thought an argument against the external existence of colours that they change? We do not ask that the colours may be thought to be any more real than the objects

¹ Shelley's *Sensitive Plant*.

coloured ; and if the latter must be held to be real as outwardly existing things notwithstanding their capability of change, why should not the former ? and if the former must be thought to be wholly subjective because they may change with time and violence, why should not the latter ? Can we think of any object as having—just *no colour at all* ? By pounding an almond or a flower, “the clear white colour will be altered into a dirty one,” as you say ; but may not *both* of them have been in the object as they appeared to be ? The presumption is that they were ; and the disappearance of the one and the appearance of the other is no disproof of it, *unless nothing which has vanished can have been real*.

But we have been told on high authority that if colours were “really something inherent in the object, every coloured substance would manifestly appear always of the same colour by whatever light it was illuminated. But that, as everyone knows, is not the case. The beautiful violet dress which in daylight appears of the purest colour seems dull and gloomy by gaslight ; materials which in daylight are a bright blue are tinged with green in candle or lamp light. And what if the landscape or a coloured object be viewed through a tinted glass ? All colours then seem changed, without the objects in themselves being altered ; if the colour of the glass be intense, the various colours of the objects immediately disappear, and everything seems shaded in the colour of the glass. The same thing happens if some common salt be rubbed into the wick of a spirit-lamp, and surrounding objects viewed by the yellow light of such a flame : the colours disappear, or lose much of their brilliancy, and everything seems either in

mere light and shade, or else of dull gray." And "these facts," it is said, "clearly prove that colours are not inherent in objects, that they have no independent existence, but that they are called forth by some extraneous cause."¹ But we cannot see that they prove anything of the kind; and still less do they prove that colours are only sensations, or feelings, or affections of the mind—which is the main point of the discussion. Your tinted glasses and your yellow lights produced by salt being rubbed into the wicks of spirit-lamps, and so forth, through which we are asked to look at landscapes and objects, *are themselves by the statement coloured objects*, and, when looking at other things through them, we have to take account of *the new element of colour introduced by them*; and so the question of the *what* of colour remains where it was. In short, as we have already pointed out when examining a similar argument, you have, by the introduction of your tinted glasses and your coloured lights, *only turned our attention from one set of coloured objects to another of the same kind*; but you have done nothing whatever, absolutely nothing, to prove that the colours are not in the objects as they seem to be. And as to your dresses with their changing hues in changing lights, and your mother-of-pearl and necks of pigeons, and so forth, which may be seen to be of different colours according to our different relations to them and our different standpoints, we may allow that there are cases of colour simply by refraction and

¹ Schellen's *Spectrum Analysis*, part ii., 34. The same argument is used by Lucretius when he speaks of the changing colours of the pigeon's neck and the peacock's tail, and also the next argument, which we shall examine as presented by Locke, from our not seeing colours in the dark. Sec. B. ii., 794-808.

reflection of the light ; but these, again, only call our attention to the light which you tell us is coloured, and may be decomposed into colours of different refrangibilities and lengths of vibration, and so forth. And are not the dresses and the pigeons' necks with their changing colours *coloured* as they seem to be ? Is a violet dress not a *coloured dress*, however it may appear in gas-light ? And are the colours not there, out there, as they seem to be ? That they change in different lights and in different relations is no more proof that they are not than that my varying visions of a mountain in different lights, and at different distances, and from different standpoints, are to be taken as proof that it has no real existence outwardly, or than our dreams and illusions are to be taken as proof that there is no real material world at all, but only an illusive and spectral appearance of one.

To demand that things should be seen to be the same in whatever light they are viewed is like absurdly asking for vision without the appropriate conditions of vision. And the same line of argument is only continued when it is asked, But how can colours be real when we do not see them in the dark ? "Consider," says Locke, "the red and white colours in porphyry : hinder light from striking on it, and its colours vanish, it no longer produces any such ideas in us ; upon the return of light it produces these appearances in us again. Can anyone think any real alterations are made in the porphyry by the presence or absence of light, and that those ideas of whiteness are really in porphyry in light, when it is plain it has no colour in the dark ?"¹ But it is not so plain

¹ *Of Human Understanding*, b. ii., c. 8., 19.

that it has no colour in the dark. We do not *see* the colour ; but we may say the same of the porphyry itself and of the world at large. We do not see houses, nor trees, nor one another, nor anything that offers resistance to our locomotive energy ; but is that any sufficient reason for saying or thinking that they have then no real existence ? You may say, ' But we can feel such objects—they may impede our movements ; and so we may have evidence of their existence though we cannot see them.' Yes ; we may thus ascertain the existence of things immediately around us, perhaps, so long as we feel and press against them ; but what evidence have we that they exist when we do not thus feel them ? We believe that they are, and we have reason for believing so from the general permanency of things, and from the fact that we are in the world of which they form a part. And so much may be said for colour. And you might as well say that because I cannot see through a stone wall, I can have no reason for believing that there is anything beyond it, as to say that colours can have no real existence outwardly because we do not see them.

The argument of Locke reminds us of the game bo-peep with children. We draw a handkerchief over his eyes : ' O, where is Johnnie ? He's away—way ; he's all away.' The handkerchief drops : ' No : there he is again.' But Johnnie was not away : his face was only covered. And so with colour in the dark. The curtain drops, and Locke and would-be philosophers cry to us, ' It's all away ; the colour is gone.' But just in the sense that Johnnie was gone. They only play bo-peep with us, but with this great difference, that whereas nurses only make believe, and

children think they are talking truth, philosophers think *they* are talking truth, and we, their children intellectually, do not believe them.

“Can anyone think any real alterations are made in the porphyry by the presence or absence of light?” asks Locke. Can anyone? we may ask in reply. For if no real alteration is made, as seems to be implied by the question, how can objects be thought to have no colour in the dark when we see them as coloured in the light? And if no real alteration has been made, how can it be reasonably maintained, as is done, that colour is only a change in texture, or “the certain bulk, figure, and motion of the insensible parts” in the bodies themselves? No real change has been made in the bulk, figure, or motion of the porphyry, it would seem; then why, we may retort, unless colour be wholly of subjective origin, do we not see things in the dark as we do in the light—that is, as coloured? And if colour be wholly of subjective origin, as might be maintained by the first mode of argumentation we examined, what difference can the presence or absence of light be supposed to make in our perceptions of colour? And what explanation can be given of the order and constancy of our perceptions of coloured phenomena? or of the change of our perceptions in our movements? or of the fact that the blind have not the same perceptions and conceptions of colour as we have? *The argument, as stated by Locke, only leaves the phenomena to be accounted for out of account.*

But a much more subtle form of argument for the non-existence of colour in the dark than Locke has given might be advanced. It might be said that as we can conceive of colour, or, which is the same

thing, of things as seen, only in and through the thought of light, we cannot think, or imagine even a possibility, of things being coloured in the dark, which is the absence or complete negation of light. If we cannot see things, or imagine them as seen, and if we cannot think of seeing them except as in the light, it would seem that light is an absolute condition of colour, and that colour and the seeing of it are inseparable. In other words, it is impossible to separate colour from the thought of seeing it in the light. Colour can be thought of as colour only to a percipient eye, and to an eye such as ours. And so we are justified, it might be affirmed, not only in saying that colour has no existence in the dark, but that *it cannot have*; for that is only another way of saying, we cannot *think* it to have any such existence. And, of course, if it does not inhere as a constitutive element of things in the dark, it cannot be supposed to be any real inherent quality of them at any time or anywhere.

Now, here at last, it would seem, we have something like a real difficulty to contend with—a truly formidable objection to meet. And how are we to meet it? For light and colour, we concede, can be thought of *only through the eye*, so to speak, so that to think of colour is just the same thing as to think of it as seen or visible. That we grant, and would maintain. But now let us ask a question. We may think of things, such as stones, and chairs, and tables existing in the dark, may we not? To be sure we can. I can as easily think of furniture in a dark room as in a room in which the sun is shining at mid-day; and it is there all the same whether I think of it or not. My thinking about it does not put it there,

nor would my forgetting it nor my death remove it, would it? No. Well, then, let us ask another question. We may think not only of things such as we have mentioned existing in the dark, but of this or that particular thing, may we not? Yes, we may think of any particular piece of furniture, or of any plant or flower, or of any animal, or of any individual man or woman which we have ever seen. Undeniably we may. But can we think of any particular picture, or flower, or animal, or plant, without thinking of it in a measure *as we saw it*? And can we think of it as we saw it without thinking of it as coloured? We may think of a horse standing in a dark stable, and we may think of it as that particular favourite bay, may we not? But what is that but to think of colour in the dark, and of colour as a quality of an external object? If we allow that things may exist in the dark—things with a definite extension, magnitude, and figure which *we have seen*—there is no escaping the conclusion that we may think of them as coloured, or, in other words, as we have seen them. We naturally and inevitably think of them as they appear in sense-perception.

But what have we now done? We have answered the objection by admitting it in principle; we affirm it to be harmless. When we come to think of it closely, it really amounts to no more than this, that as we cannot see things as in sense-perception without light, we cannot think of seeing them with the eyes in the dark. But that is a very innocent proposition, as we have already tried to show. Light is, indeed, a necessary condition of the perception of colour by the eye, and of the conception of it in this respect,

that had we never seen it we never would have come to represent it in thought or to think of it as existing. So understood we can think of things as coloured, or seen, only by and through the thought of light; but apart from the same condition we not only could not think of things as coloured in the dark, *we could not even think of them as coloured in the light.* For light and colour are both excluded by the exclusion of the thought of seeing. It is very true that we cannot think of things as coloured in the dark, if "in the dark" be understood to exclude all thought of seeing, or as cancelling the thought of a percipient subject; but that is just saying that we cannot think of them as coloured *if we do not think of them at all.* But in such a sense there can be no "in the dark" to thought. In the very act of thinking we destroy the darkness in that respect. We must bear in mind that seeing is as necessary to the existence of the thought of light as light is to the existence of colour. Light is light only to a seeing eye; and in every thought of light or colour is involved the thought of seeing it. Colour can be thought of as colour only to a percipient eye, and to an eye such as ours, you say. Most true; *but where the thought of colour is the eye is never awanting.* For we can think of colour only as through the eye—either as actually or ideally perceived or perceptible.¹

But here we may be instantly met by another objection. Is not the very fact of seeing (which by itself implies all that is meant by seeing colour in the light) to be explained, it will be asked, by the

¹ Cf. Professor Ferrier *passim*, but especially his two papers, "The Crisis of Modern Speculation" and "Berkeley and Idealism" in *Lectures and Philosophical Remains*, vol. ii.

vibrations of the optic nerve? And may we not thus, after all, still hold that colour is only a nervous affection induced by the insensible parts of things without us? Modern investigation, it will be said, seems to prove that what to us are different colours are outwardly only different degrees of motion or rates of vibration, and that the same motion may announce itself to us indifferently by different nerves, as colour, heat, or sound. Thus Tyndall: "We have the strongest reason for believing that what the nerves convey to the brain is in all cases *motion*. It is the motion excited by sugar in the nerves of taste which, transmitted to the brain, produces the sensation of sweetness, while bitterness is the result of the motion produced by aloes. It is the motion excited in the olfactory nerves by the effluvium of a rose which announces itself in the brain as the odour of the rose. It is the motion imparted by the sunbeams to the optic nerve which, when it reaches the brain, awakes the consciousness of light; while a similar motion imparted to other nerves resolves itself into heat in the same wonderful organ."¹ And more particularly with regard to colour: "By means of a prism Sir Isaac Newton unravelled the texture of solar light, and by the same simple instrument we can investigate the luminous changes of our platinum wire. . . . By such prismatic analysis Dr. Draper has shown that, when the platinum wire first begins to glow, the light emitted is a pure red. As the glow augments the red becomes more brilliant, but at the same time orange rays are added to the emission. Augmenting the temperature still further,

¹ *On Sound*, lect. i.

yellow rays appear beside the orange; after the yellow, green rays are emitted, and after the green come, in succession, blue, indigo, and violet rays.”¹ It would thus seem that the different colours are in the platinum wire, in which they seem to be only different degrees of heat. But the heat itself is a mode of motion; and the colours may be shown to arise in the same order from the different rates of vibration. “The colour first exhibited is red, which corresponds to the lowest rate of vibration of which the eye is able to take cognizance. By augmenting the strength of the electric current, more rapid vibrations are introduced, and orange rays appear. A quicker rate of vibration produces yellow, a still quicker green; and by further augmenting the rapidity, we pass through blue, indigo, and violet to the extreme ultra-violet rays.

“Such are the changes,” he continues, “recognized by the mind in the wire itself, as concurrent with the visual changes taking place in the eye. But what connects the wire with this organ? By what means does it send such intelligence of its varying condition to the optic nerve? Heat being, as defined by Locke, ‘a very brisk agitation of the insensible parts of an object,’ it is readily conceivable that on touching a heated body the agitation may communicate itself to the adjacent nerves and announce itself to them as light or heat. But the optic nerve does not touch the hot platinum, and hence the pertinence of the question. By what agency are the vibrations of the wire transmitted to the eye?

“The answer to this question involves one of the most important physical conceptions that the mind of

¹ *Fragments of Science*, vol. i., c. 2, 1.

man has yet achieved; the conception of a medium filling space, and fitted mechanically for the transmission of sound. This medium is called the *luminiferous ether*. Every vibration of every atom of our platinum wire raises in this ether a wave, which speeds through it at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. The aether suffers no rupture of continuity at the surface of the eye, the inter-molecular spaces of the various humours are filled with it; hence the waves generated by the glowing platinum can cross these humours and impinge on the optic nerve at the back of the eye. Thus the sensation of light reduces itself to the acceptance of motion." And "when we see a platinum wire raised gradually to a white heat, and emitting in succession all the colours of the spectrum, we are simply conscious of a series of changes in the condition of our own eyes."¹

So far Tyndall; and we have been thus particular in quoting him, because, being a man of science, with a decided leaning to metaphysics, his words might be supposed to have some weight. Stated shortly his theory seems to be that colour is only an affection of the optic nerve induced by motion from without, or, in other words, that it is, properly speaking, only a sensation as metaphysicians usually suppose it to be.

Now as to the statement that "what the nerves convey to the brain is in all cases motion," we may first remark that it is nearly as old as philosophy itself. Had we believed indeed in the transmigration of souls, we might have supposed that we had one of the ancient atomists or sophists addressing us in Tyndall. Compare, for instance, the Protagorean doctrine on this

¹ *Fragments of Science*, vol. I., c. 2, 1.

point as expressed by Cudworth. "That which we know by sense concerning honey and wormwood, is only that our taste is so affected from them; but what absolute mode or disposition of parts in them causes these different sensations in us, belongs to some other faculty of the soul to discover. And hence it comes to pass that, though the natures or essences of things be simple, yet *one and the same thing perceived by our several senses begets several passions and phantasms in us*. Flame, which is nothing but a violent agitation of the small particles of a body by the rapid subtle matter; *the same motion communicated to the eye or optic nerves begets one kind of sensible idea or phantasm called light, but to the nerves of touch another quite different from it called heat*; therefore neither light nor heat, according to those sensible ideas which we have of them, are really and absolutely in the flame without, which is but one kind of motion or agitation of matter, but only fantastically and relatively, the one to our sight, the other to our touch."¹ The lines in italics express Tyndall's thought in nearly the same words. It is not then new. And much less is it adequate and philosophic, as embracing and explaining all the facts of the case. For it omits all that is *distinctive* in the perceptions of the several senses. Talk of motion as you will, a colour is not a sound, nor is a sound the sensation of sweetness; and if we seek an explanation of their differences, we shall be obliged, we suspect, to seek it elsewhere than in nerve vibration. If all is motion, the difference must be in the motion; but what then of the differences and of our perceptions of them? Strike out all the differences, and you may no doubt produce uniformity in the sensations of the

¹ *Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, b. iii., c. 4.

brain, as in all things; but in that way you do not *explain* the differences, but *ignore* them.

Then as to colour in particular: do the facts to which Tyndall appeals bear out his inference? do they warrant his conclusion as to the *where* and *what* of colour? Take the colours of the platinum wire. They are due to the rate and amplitude of the molecular vibrations, we are told. May be; but what have you done to prove that they are not in the platinum wire, as they seem to be, and that when we see them "we are simply conscious of a series of changes in the condition of our own eyes"? The optic nerve may be made to vibrate by the changes in the wire, as you say, and the nervous vibration may be a necessary condition of my seeing the wire as coloured; but no enumeration of the *conditions* of vision can belie the *fact* of vision, or warrant the inference that things in general are not as they seem to be. And, when all is done, no number of experiments in all the platinum wires in the world would convince us that the different colours we see in a carpet of uniform texture and material are merely the results of optic nerve vibration produced by the different degrees of heat or motion in the molecules of the parts of the carpet which seem to be coloured. What about the *permanence* of the colours in all the various temperatures of the changing seasons, or which can be produced by artificial means without actually scorching the material? What about the *order* in which we always see them in sunshine or shadow, in winter's piercing cold or summer's sweltering heat? What about their *number*? And why do I always see them in this particular carpet, and in this par-

ticular order of arrangement, and not in others which are of the same material and texture, and in the same conditions of temperature? Is the whiteness of heat and of snow the result of their sameness of temperature? Shall we be told that the different colours of hens are due to the different rates of vibration in the different parts of their feathers? and that the uniformity of order in the colours of the different species of animals and plants, and all such phenomena, may be satisfactorily accounted for by the hypothesis of different degrees of temperature and motion in the atoms which compose them?

But again. If colour be produced by an agitation of the optic nerve, what determines the optic nerve to motion? Or, as Tyndall has it, "If *light* be produced by an agitation of the optic nerve or retina, what is it that produces the agitation?" "Wave motion" is the answer—"light is a product of wave motion"—"the sensation of light reduces itself to the acceptance of motion"—"it is this motion that constitutes the objective cause of what in our sensations are light and heat." But what *kind* of wave motion we persistently and inquisitively ask? For the sensations of light and heat are not produced by all kinds of wave motion. The blast of a trumpet, or the stroke of a hammer on an empty cask, or the wave of a hand, may produce wave motion, we suppose, but not the sensations of light and colour as you call them. What kind of wave motion, then, we are forced to ask, determines the optic nerve to the production of light and colour? And the answer must be, *luminous* wave motion, or the motion of the *luminiferous* ether. But what is that but saying that light is not produced by an

agitation of the optic nerve or retina at all, but is the antecedent and determining cause of that agitation? Insert luminous now in Tyndall's answer to his own question, and read "light is a product of *luminous* wave-motion," and what does it mean but that light is a product of light, or, shorter, that light is light? Read "the sensation of light reduces itself to the reception of *luminous* wave-motion," or "it is the motion of the *luminiferous* ether that constitutes the objective cause of what in our sensations are light and heat"; and what do these propositions amount to but to this, that *light* is the cause of our *sensation of light*? It is a *wave of light*, or *luminous* wave-motion, and not motion simply, that is the objective cause of our *sensation* of light. Light, therefore, as in common apprehension, is without us, and not a mere affection of the optic nerve, not "a mere sensation"—which is simply an idiotic statement, come from whom it may; and if light, then colour also, for light without colour is a contradiction.

And that scientists are in fact at one with the people in thinking of colour as a quality of things around us, might be argued from their experiments as to its influence on absorption and radiation, and also perhaps from the discoveries that have been made by the spectroscope as to the constitution of the sun, etc. With regard to the former, let us again quote Tyndall. "Now Melloni, and Masson, and Courtepée," says he, "experimented thus: they mixed their powders and precipitates with gum-water, and laid them by means of a brush upon the surfaces of a cube like this. True, they saw their red colours red, their white ones white, and their black ones black, but they saw these colours through the coat

of varnish which surrounded every particle. When, therefore, it was concluded that colour had no influence on radiation, no chance had been given to it of asserting its influence. . . . From all this it is evident that as regards the radiation and absorption of non-luminous heat, colour teaches us nothing; and that even as regards the radiation of the sun, consisting as it does mainly of non-luminous rays, conclusions as to the influence of colour may be altogether delusive.”¹ Now it must be evident, I think, that when he speaks of the influence, or the possible influence, of colour on absorption and radiation, he is thinking of it as a quality in external objects, and not as an affection of the optic nerve. And indeed if he wanted to state the doctrine that colours are in the objects looked at as they seem to be, how could he do it better than in the second sentence of the quotation just made? It is true, he says, that the red powders were red, and they saw that they were red, the white ones white, and they saw that they were white, the black ones black, and they saw that they were black; and not only so, they saw these colours *through the coat of varnish which encircled every particle of their powders*. Could there be any stronger statement of the truth of the point we are arguing for?

It seems to us that something is wanted to give verisimilitude and consistency to the statements of scientific men when they try to tell us what light and colour are; for at present they have neither. At one time we are told that light is “a mode of motion”—which would make it indistinguishable from walking or swimming, which both are modes of motion; at another time that “it may be defined as any effect

¹ *Fragments of Science*, vol. i., c. 3.

on the sense of sight"—which might be applicable to a pain in the eye from the blow of a hand or the prick of a needle; and at another time that it is "undoubtedly a mere sensation arising in the brain"—which it is no more than it is a lamp-post or a headache. It is a "mode of motion" (as walking is) and a "sensation arising in the brain" (as a headache is), and yet it may pass through air and water in motion, and through holes in shutters, and be thrown upon screens, and be reflected, and refracted, and decomposed into different kinds with different degrees of refrangibility, and we do not know with what all besides. It is consequently not only a mode of motion, but a very *peculiar* mode of motion with *manifoldness* in its nature—if it indeed be a motion at all. For neither motion nor sensation by itself gives it as *light*. That which distinguishes it in thought and perception is still wanting, and has not once emerged in your enumeration of antecedent or concomitant motions and conditions of vision. They have given us everything but the light itself. *That* it still wanting. And the mystery and inconsistency of it, from a scientific point of view, is not lessened, but increased, when we are told that if it were not *reflected* from objects they would not be visible, and yet that black objects (which are as visible as white ones) are black because they *absorb* all the coloured rays. And to make confusion still worse confounded, and to cap the climax with absurdity, we are assured that "though light is undoubtedly a mere sensation arising in the brain, it is utterly impossible to conceive that it is not outside the retina."¹ "Credo quia impossibile est." And

¹ Huxley's *Hume* (English Men of Letters Series), c. 6.

so, by your attempted scientific statements and definitions, we are left with a whirl of phantasmagoric illusions for truth, and in a world of dreams as wild and inconsistent as ever sprung from the brain of madman; and it is with a sense of relief that we turn to the simple saying of a man who has left his mark on the world's history, and who wrote to the Ephesians, that "whatsoever doth make manifest is light." That, we should say, is much nearer the mark as a definition of light than "a mode of motion," or "ether vibrations," or "a sensation arising in the brain"; and we would commend it to the consideration of scientists.

But, notwithstanding some expressions which might seem to imply the contrary, it is surely an altogether superfluous task to try and prove to anyone that the sun shines, and that we individually are not the sources of the light of day. That the sun shines, and is the source of light and heat to the earth, will be denied by no one, we suppose. But the astounding thing is that, while admitting and asserting that, philosophers should still continue in their philosophic moods to speak as if we individually might be the sole and exclusive sources of light and colour to ourselves, that they should all but unanimously take it for granted that colour is only an affection of the sentient organism or a product of the optic nerve. But if the sun is luminous and we are not the sun, if he shines continually, imparting light and heat to other worlds than ours, how can we possibly maintain with consistency that colour is only a nervous affection? Our thought of him as luminous, or as shining in other worlds, is still *our* thought of course; but inasmuch as it is

our thought *of him*, or *of other worlds*, it is still true to us that *he* is luminous, that *they* are lighted up by him, and that if luminous, or lighted up, then so far coloured. And so of other things. We cannot think of things, or describe them, apart from our perceptions of them, or save as we have perceived them; but neither can we think or speak of our perceptions of them independently of the objects perceived or thought of. *They* are always involved in the thought of our perceptions of them. So that hold by the extreme of even subjective idealism and say that all realities so called are only creations of the individual Ego, it will still be true that it is inseparable in thought from the objects seen, if it is not the very objects themselves. And with that decision we might be content to leave it; for, as we have already said, we do not want to make out that colour has more of an objective existence or reality than the objects which we see as coloured.

In the meantime, however, we take it for granted, as all must practically do, that there is what is called an outward world, a world in which we live and move, which produces us rather than we it, which existed before us and may be after us—a world of mountains, and rivers, and oceans, and shores, which neither you nor I have made nor can abolish—a universe of worlds, in fact, of blending lights and shadows running out interminably into space; and we ask, can we think of a single material object in the whole of this universe as having just *no colour at all*? Take even a single atom of it if you will: we must still think of it as possessed of certain qualities, as having at least

extension, size, and figure: and is not extension actually inseparable in thought from colour and colour from extension? You may doubtless say that they are united only in our thoughts of them, that their union is the result of the Law of Inseparable Association, as John Stuart Mill would put it, and that our inability to conceive of them apart is no proof that they may not exist apart. But, however that may be, and in whatever way their inseparability may be explained, it is generally admitted that in the present state of our experience they *are* inseparable in thought; and if they have become *by any means* actually inseparable in thought, how can we possibly think of them apart, or conceive of any object as really and altogether uncoloured? Can a thing be and not be at the same time and in the same relations? Let colour go, think of it as a sensation merely, as something within the mind and in the mind only, and a Berkeley may prove to your satisfaction that there is nothing out of it, and a Hume following in his track, and by a similar process of reasoning, may further show you that there is no continued and independent existence whatsoever, not even a mind to make that observation—that there is nothing but impressions and ideas, which may themselves be but fictions, and a series of these, perhaps, aware of itself as a series.¹ “If colours, sounds, tastes, and smells,” says Hume, “be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possessed of a real, continued, and independent existence; not even motion,

¹ “If we speak of the mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future.”—Mill's *Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy*, c. 12.

extension, and solidity, which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on.”¹ And so wrote Jonathan Edwards. “The idea we have of space,” he said, “and what we call by that name, is only *coloured space*, and is entirely taken out of the mind, if colour be taken away. And so all that we call extension, motion, and figure, is gone, if colour is gone.”² And so thinks Herbert Spencer. “When our consciousness of colour entirely ceases,” he says, “our consciousness of visible form, size, and place, ceases with it.”³

But that colour is not a sensation in any proper and distinctive sense of the word seems evident from such facts as these:—(1) that we see it, have a perception of it; (2) that we see it as extended in space and simultaneously manifold; (3) as permanent; and (4) as at a distance. We see it. There can be no doubt of that. But can we see a feeling or an affection of our own optic nerve? Can it be measured by a rod or line? May it be from a point to ten, or fifteen, or fifteen hundred yards in length? And what is its shape or figure? round, or square, or triangular, or what? Can we talk of differently coloured sensations or feelings lying out of each other in space, and *out there*, so far apart from, and external to, ourselves? Can we put them from us and point to them, saying, Those are our feelings, are not they pretty? And if we cannot do that, how can we identify them with colours which may be seen, pointed to, and measured as to extent of surface, and so forth?

¹ *Treatise of Human Nature*, b. i., part iv., sect. 4.

² Appendix to *Memoir of Jonathan Edwards*, by Sereno E. Dwight, No. 4.

³ *Principles of Psychology*, vol. ii., part vi., c. 11., second edition.

So far from regarding colour as a mere sensation, I am not sure that there is usually any sensation involved in the perception of it at all. It has been an axiom in philosophy, no doubt, that sensation and perception are always co-existent, though not always in the same proportions—that, as Sir Wm. Hamilton has it, “they are always found in an inverse ratio to each other.” But if a sensation is the same thing as a consciously perceived nervous affection or feeling, and if it exists only as we are conscious of it, I doubt very much whether I am conscious of a sensation in every visual perception. I am conscious of myself as perceiving, but not as having a sensation produced by the thing perceived. May it not be that as we become insensible emotionally by habit to the sight of surgical operations and the like, the sensation connected with visual perception may, through continuous and life-long habit, die out of consciousness altogether, and so cease to be in ordinary cases?

As to the statement that colours are seen as at a distance, and so forth, I am aware that all sorts of objections may be made to it. It may be said that while all allow that they are seen *as at* a distance, or *as if* they were distant, the distance can be only seeming; that distance is not an original, but an acquired, perception; that, in fact, we never do see anything distant, and never can—that all that we can possibly see is “two distinct curved pictures” of objects on the retinae of our eyes, etc.¹ But the

¹ “‘I see a theatre.’ I do not; the utmost I can possibly see is two distinct curved pictures of a theatre,” etc.—“The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences,” by Professor W. K. Clifford, *Contemporary Review*, October, 1874. “All that we see is the angular expansion measured on the retina.”—Bain on *The Emotions and the Will*, section on “Sensation and Perception.”

answer to all such objections is very simple. Whatever may be the conditions or concomitants of vision, the "two distinct curved pictures" of objects on the retinae *are just exactly what we do not see*. There may be the two pictures on the retinae, but the object seen is single; there may be the reflection and the refraction of light, and optic nerve vibration, and all the rest of it; but what I see when I look at the table before me is not the reflection and refraction of light, nor the vibration of any nerve, nor the retinae of the eyes, nor the brain, nor my own organism at all as affected, but the table which *is at a distance as at a distance*.¹ You may call that an acquired perception if you like; but is it any the less real or reliable for that? If you go far enough back into my mental history, you may reach a time when I did not see anything; but that does not interfere with or hinder my seeing things now. And why should it be thought necessary that we should find out what babies see, or chickens a day or two old when newly uncapped, or blind people who have just had their eyes opened, in order to determine what we really see *now*? Are our perceptions at the *outset* of our

¹ "Surely the *object of perception*," says James Martineau, "is the *thing perceived*; and a thing perceived cannot be a *thing unknown*. But the majority of men know nothing of the effluvia of the orange, the vibrations of the air, the luminous undulations, or any of the approximate agents in sensation. Their minds are running on the remoter realities—the scented fruit, the ringing bell, the shining fire—of which they learn something by the use of their senses; and except of these as known, and of themselves as knowing, they have no cognition at all. Psychologically the ethereal emanations make no appearance, and are as though they did not exist. If, therefore, in the ordinary exercise of their senses men do not perceive what is at some distance, either they perceive nothing, or they perceive something without knowing it."—*Essay on Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*.

experience more to be trusted than in after life when our organs have grown strong and keen by practice?¹ Or are our perceptions *now* to be limited and measured by what we may guess we may have seen *then*, or by what others may have seen when newly couched? We see no reason for saying so, and we think it would be most irrational to affirm it. Yet that is what is often done by those who call themselves psychologists and metaphysicians.

It may be very stupid and very unphilosophical to say it, but we cannot help believing that the facts generally adduced as arguments fail altogether in warranting the conclusion that colour is not usually in the objects seen as coloured, but in us who see them. We think that after all that is an unwarranted and pernicious, absurd assumption, and that the question of colour remains where it would have been had such arguments as those we have examined never been stated or thought of. And, though we cannot point

¹ John Stuart Mill thought that they were, it would seem. "Could we try the experiment of the first consciousness in any infant," he says, "its first reception of the impression which we call external, whatever was present in that first consciousness would be *the genuine testimony of consciousness*, and would be as much entitled to credit, indeed there would be as little possibility of discrediting it, as our sensations themselves. But we have no means of now ascertaining, by direct evidence, whether we were conscious of outward and extended objects when we first opened our eyes to the light. That a belief or knowledge of such objects is in our consciousness now, whenever we use our eyes or our muscles, is no reason for concluding that it was there from the beginning, until we have settled the question whether it could possibly have been brought in since."—*Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy*, c. 9. But as, according to him, "we have no means of interrogating consciousness *in the only circumstances in which it is possible for it to give a trustworthy answer*," it would seem to be a hopeless task to try and settle the question whether it could have been brought in since or not. For consciousness, it would seem, not only *may*, but *must*, now deceive us on every hand and always! It is pleasing, however, to get from him the admission that there can be no doubt that when we see colour we see it as in an object, and that with our experience we really do perceive distance.

to many on our side who may be called philosophers, we are not alone in our opinion. For omitting such writers as Beattie, who would class the existence of colour as a quality of external things among intuitive truths,¹ we have Dr. Reid standing up for it as really a quality of outward objects.² He makes a distinction, it is true, between the colour in objects and *the appearance of colour* to the eye; but the very distinction brings out his belief in colour as a quality of things around us. Cousin argues in his *Review of Locke* for the secondary qualities of matter as "real properties in bodies,"³ and of colour specially he says it "is perhaps more inherent in figure than is believed."⁴ Dr. M'Cosh too, who is generally cautious in his statements, expresses himself in a similar way. "I confess," he says, "I have always fondly clung to the idea that, sooner or later, colour will be found by physical investigation to have a reality, I do not say of what kind, in every material object."⁵ And the Hon. Roden Noel speaks without any doubt on the subject. "I have argued elsewhere" (*Contemporary Review*, June, 1872), says he, "that colours, etc., are in the object, as the vulgar suppose. . . . When it is said that colour is a sensation, and we do not want it twice, the point in dispute is assumed. Colour is *not* a sensation, but a quality known through sense."⁶ And to these expressions of opinion on the part of

¹ *Essay on Truth*, part ii., c. 1, 3.

² *Inquiry*, c. 6, sect. 4; *Intellectual Powers*, Essay ii., c. 18.

³ Lecture vii.

⁴ Lecture ix.

⁵ *Intuitions of the Mind*, part ii., b. i., c. 1, sect. 3; see also appendix to *Method of Divine Government*, art. ii.; and *Typical Forms and Special Ends in Creation*, c. 3.

⁶ Note to art. "On Causality in Will and Motion" in *Contemporary Review*, February 7, 1874.

metaphysicians we may add those of an expert or two in physical science. When giving an account of Newton's discoveries in optics, Professor Playfair thought it followed from his experiments "that colours are not qualities which light derives from refraction or reflection, *but are original and connate properties* connected with the different degrees of refrangibility that belong to the different rays"; and says, with regard to natural bodies, that we must suppose them to be coloured, because of the disposition of each to reflect more copiously the light of its own peculiar colour.¹ And Sir John F. W. Herschel concludes that "colour is not a superinduced but an inherent quality of the luminous rays" from the fact that by the reunion of all the coloured prismatic rays white light is reproduced, and because, "if we exclude from this reunion any portion of the spectrum, the reconstituted beam is coloured, and if the rays so excluded be not *extinguished*, but diverted aside, and themselves collected and reunited into another and separate beam, this will also be coloured, but with a tint *complementary* to that of the first."²

And now let us hear what a great art critic and artist has to say on the subject. "The word 'Blue,'" says Ruskin, "does *not* mean the *sensation* caused by a gentian on the human eye; but it means the *power* of producing that sensation; and this power is always there, in the thing, whether we are there to experience it or not, and would remain there though there were not left a man on the face of the earth. . . . A gentian does not produce the sensation of blueness if

¹ Dissertation on the Progress of Mathematical and Physical Science in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, eighth edition.

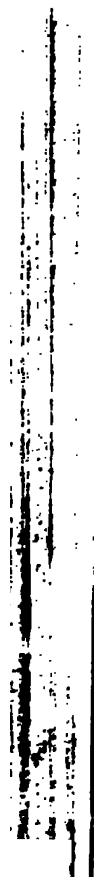
² *Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, vi.

you do not look at it. But it has always the power of doing so ; its particles being everlastingly so arranged by its Maker. And, therefore, the gentian and the sky are always verily blue, whatever philosophy may say to the contrary ; and if you do not see them blue when you look at them, it is not their fault, but yours."¹

In the company of such men we are content to abide ; and, till we find better arguments to the contrary than we have yet come across, we must think and maintain with them and with the masses that there is a quality in things around us in the outward world which is perceived and thought of as colour.

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii., part iv., c. 12, sect. 2.

END.



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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number of people aged 75 and over has increased from 4.5 million to 6.5 million (Office of National Statistics 2000). The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase to 15.5 million by 2020, and the number of people aged 75 and over to 8.5 million (Office of National Statistics 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people in the UK, and a number of initiatives have been launched to address this need. The Department of Health has launched the 'Age Friendly' initiative, which aims to make the UK a more age-friendly country. This initiative includes a number of measures, such as improving the accessibility of public transport, and providing more support for older people in the community. The Department of Health has also launched the 'Age Well' initiative, which aims to help older people to live well into old age. This initiative includes a number of measures, such as providing more support for older people in the community, and helping older people to stay active and healthy.

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